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HOW TO BE A  
SUCCESSFUL WRITER





# How To Be A Successful Writer

By  
JAMES IRVING

*Author of "How to Sell Manuscripts With Ease,"  
"How New Writers Succeed," "The A B C of  
Successful Writing," "The Ten Great  
Secrets of Successful Authorship,"  
Etc., Etc.*



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# A Foreword

By

THE AUTHORS' PRESS

PUBLISHERS OF

THIS BOOK



SOME folks have the absurd idea that only a genius endowed with God-given power can succeed as a writer. You should not tolerate this foolish notion for a minute. People are born with *tendencies*, not with *talents*. So, if you *like* to write, you are pretty sure to succeed—if you try hard enough. George Saintsbury, greatest critic of all time, says: “As a matter of fact there is not so very much genius in the world. In prose, especially, it is possible to gain a very high place, and to deserve it, without any genius at all.”

Just tell yourself this: “It *can* be done—it *has* been done by countless others, no different than I. All I must do is *master the right principles* and *intelligently apply them*.”

True, there are rare freaks, so to speak, seemingly born to fame; but they are only the exceptions proving the rule. Ninety-nine of every hundred writers win by work. Success is not tendered them on a golden platter!

To the average beginner, however, writing is a puzzle. When studying this lucrative art, he often becomes lost in a maze of technicalities. Why? Simply because most books purporting to teach the art of writing seem to have had as their aim the confusion of the reader instead of the simplification of writing.

Hence, the many unsuccessful beginners—the pathetically ambitious men and women writers, earnestly, faithfully, sincerely struggling to reach the Goal Triumphant, yet doomed to failure even before they start. And all along they might easily have succeeded—might easily have been writing and selling their work in a sensible manner.

For there IS an easy way to write. There is nothing mysterious or complicated about it. Mr. Irving proves this in the following chapters. Here he gives you up-to-the-minute writing SIMPLIFIED and made easy for the average individual. His well-tested principles will greatly help you turn your ideas into dollars.

Follow his simple system. Practice his plain methods. You will one day find it all so easy you'll wonder how anyone COULD fail!

Many beginners have found GOLD in the New Irving Method. Is there any *good* reason why *you* shouldn't?





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PART I

THE NEW IRVING METHOD  
OF WRITING SHORT STORIES

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

The prospective writer of short-story material has chosen the most delightful, instructive and commonly helpful field in the whole world of literary effort. Everyone loves to read short stories, and this keen delight in following the adventures, trials and tribulations of a favorite hero or heroine is only surpassed by the pleasure of the story writer himself in weaving his brain children for universal admiration and acclaim. For truly 'tis a deep and satisfying feeling to know that all over the world readers are following the words that you have written and reaping the benefits of your observations and moral teachings.

Robert Louis Stevenson tells us that fiction has a bigger and more positive appeal than any other kind of writing, and this applies especially to fiction's shortest form—the short story. How wonderful and easy it is to bend the energies of the characters you create to some moral end, to use them as an instrument which will not only amuse and help another to spend profitably some idle hour, but will unconsciously, subtly, yet powerfully, enforce some far-reaching good upon the mind of the reader and make him a better man for the reading.

There are many excellent definitions of the short story. The following by Clayton Hamilton will be well to bear in mind. "The short story aims to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy of means that is consistent with the utmost emphasis."

Short stories may contain from one to seven thousand words. The most popular length with magazine editors, however, is the story of three or four thousand words. Stories of this length usually are read at one sitting, and it is largely in this short length of time required to assimilate the plot of the story that its effectiveness lies, because of the single and unified impression gained. The novel can be read only in a series of sittings or possibly at one sitting; unless the fabric of the novel, however, is very engaging, the reader is apt to tire toward the conclusion. The short story bears the same relation to the novel that the lyric bears to the epic poem, both the short forms being the more popular and effective.

Everyone reads short stories; consequently, the young author will already have a more or less defined impression of the materials which go to make up a story, and the methods in which they are handled. After studying the following detailed analysis of the short-story form, however, the aspiring writer will read stories with renewed zest and appreciation.



## CHAPTER II

### THEME

The theme bears the same relation to the story that the foundation bears to the finished structure. It is the underlying idea, the causation of the story, the truth or moral on which the plot is based; it receives its vital spark of life from any one of innumerable meritorious philosophies of life, strange and suggestive experiences, odd characters, human passions and the like. The theme is that which the writer wishes to impress upon his reader, the central idea which he wishes to set forth as impressively and indicatively as possible. Having decided which phase of life he wishes to portray in his story, it will be wise for the prospective author to decide exactly just what type of story he is about to write:—stories are based on character, setting, incident, emotion and idea.

*Stories Based On Character.*—All stories have characters of some sort in various numbers. Some writers will wish to base their stories on the study of some odd character with whom they are intimately acquainted, and whose passions and peculiarities, in reaction with the other characters of the story and the circumstances in which the thematic character is placed, they feel will prove entertaining and worthy of portrayal. All stories in which characterization or the conflicts of various emotions predominate, are stories of character. A story in which a son, by force of circumstances must choose between the love of his mother and the respect and worship of his father, set off by situations necessary to give the story suspense, is a story of character. The study in a story based on such a theme would be a study of the son. Many of Victor Hugo's writings are based on character. In one of his writings, the center of the stage is held by a man who struggles tempestuously with the elements. Edgar Allen Poe's story, "The Coward," is one of character. The story's movement brings out potently the latent cowardice of the main character, who, at the beginning of the action, is dashing and confident, but at the climax, has so lost his composure as to fall an easy, but tragic, victim to an opponent's bullet.

*Stories Based On Incidents.*—After character comes incident. Characters must act, must engage in enterprises, the more interesting and harrowing the better. Stories of incident are ordinarily stories of adventure; productions in which thrilling, exciting, ever-rushing action is featured above all else. In stories of this description, the characters are subordinate; we demand only that the hero be brave and crafty, the heroine pretty and lovable. And, though they usually conflict with various other characters in the story of incident, we are not so much interested in the influence event, emotion and circumstance have on a man's or woman's nature, as we are in the manner in which they will extricate themselves from some pressing danger. The themes on which stories of adventure are based are many and varied.

Examples are: "Arabian Nights," "Robinson Crusoe," Merrimee's "Taking of the Redoubt," together with Scott's, Dumas', and a number of Stevenson's writings, "Treasure Island," for instance. In all of these productions, we think not largely of the characters who carry along the action, but of the strange, enthralling mazes in which they become involved.

*Stories Based On Setting.*—Next come stories of setting, in which the greatest emphasis is placed upon the background, the tone, the time, the place, or the conditions of the story. Thus, I might desire to write a story in which some phase of nature—the sea or the foreboding mountains—has an overwhelming effect upon a man's life; or, again, I might know of some strange and gruesome building on which I could base a story of the supernatural, as Poe did in "The Fall of the House of Usher." The pervading mysterious atmosphere of a certain house gave Poe his theme. His next problem was to build up incidents occurring in or near the house to bear out the original theme of the supernatural.

Characters will be ordinarily actuated according to the conditions in which they are placed, or the localities in which they are set. If I am put in a healthful, beautiful and sunny land of flowers and singing birds, I am quite likely to be optimistic and to react differently than if I am placed in the New York tenement district. The complications of setting are limitless.

*Stories Based On Emotion.*—Next in order comes the story of emotion, that based on some great inner feeling, such as love, fear, hate, duty, or faith. Thus, with some stories love predominates; or we may have a production based upon a soldier's duty to his country; upon a jealous husband or a lover. Any story based upon any one of these emotions and in which character, incident and setting are subordinate to the emotion aroused in the heart of the reader, is a true story of emotion. Bulwer Lytton, in his story "The House and the Brain," evidently had in mind the production of the emotions of fear and horror, as had Poe in many of his stories of the supernatural.

*Stories Based On Ideas.*—Final in this category of stories comes the story of idea, the result, ordinarily, of the author's philosophies of life. One and all of us during certain periods of life experience certain injustices, observe inharmonies of human nature, and odd happenings among people, which, if set off in the texture of a story, might prove efficacious to man. The writer might have seen examples in which a shabbily dressed, but deserving and talented, young man or woman was received with less respect than another individual, the latter more prosperously placed but having less true culture. The possibilities of stories of this character are without end; they include all ideas of life and may be either humorous or tragic. An excellent story of idea is Edward Everett Hale's "The Man Without A Country." Hale's intention in this story was to bring clearly and powerfully to the reader's mind, lest he forget, just what his country means to him.

The greatest themes are those which are based on the innermost elements of human life, those which might appeal to an Eskimo in the far North and which might touch a responsive chord in the breast



of a swarthy Arab; for it is stories based on elemental themes, such as fear or love, that will live longest. For from the earliest epochs man has experienced fear and love, and doubtless always will.

*How And Where To Secure Your Themes.*

Now that the prospective author understands what theme is, and the type of stories which he may write, he may next ask, How am I to think of a theme? There are a number of ways in which his thoughts may be assisted; he may secure his inspiration from his everyday life; he may be working side by side with some ambitious young man who is looking ahead but who is shackled down because forced to support an aged mother or an invalid sister, yet who is really determined to grasp a fulfillment of his ideal, though it may mean the draining of his life's last blood. Or, again, the young author may look down into his own heart and analyze the fibre of his own nature. If he is broad-minded and far-sighted, he will see much therein to write of.

Another prolific source of themes is that of reading books, of securing ideas from other writers. Ofttimes one may be reading stories and it may suddenly come to one that such and such a character if placed under different and appropriate conditions might react in a very entertaining and surprising manner. Most themes permit of a multitude of developments, according to the mind that accepts them for use.

Regarding the inspiration given by the reading of books, Robert Louis Stevenson says in his article, "Books Which Have Influenced Me": "A book which has been very influential upon me fell early into my hands, and so may stand first, though I think its influence was only sensible later on, and perhaps still keeps growing, for it is a book not easily outlived; the *Essais* of Montaigne. That temperate and genial picture of life is a great gift to place in the hands of persons of to-day; they will find in these smiling pages a magazine of heroism and wisdom, all of an antique strain; they will have their 'linen decencies' and excited orthodoxies fluttered, and will (if they have any gift of reading) perceive that these have not been fluttered without some excuse and ground of reason; and (again if they have any gift of reading) they will end by seeing that this old gentleman was in a dozen ways a finer fellow, and held in a dozen ways a nobler view of life, than they or their contemporaries."

The wise writer allows the world to be his sphere of observation; allows the world, and every part and particle of the world, every object of nature, every bit of news, every suggestive happening, no matter to whom or in what manner it occurs, prove grain to his grist. As Hamilton W. Mabree narrates: "He fed himself with any kind of knowledge which was at hand; if books were at his elbow, he read them; if pictures and engravings, he studied them; if nature was within walking distance, he watched nature; if men were about him he learned the secrets of their skills; if he were on shipboard he knew the dialect of the vessel in the briefest possible time; if he traveled by stage he sat by the driver and learned all about the road, the country, the people, and the art of his companion; if he had a spare



hour in a village in which there was a manufactory, he went through it with a keen eye, and learned the methods used in it."

*Themes To Be Barred.*

Unless he is very careful indeed, the young author in choosing his theme, may decide on one which has been the foundation of innumerable other stories he has read. Everything we read, everything we hear or see, is placed firmly in our mind at all times, though we may not be able consciously to bring each mental record to instant recollection. Nevertheless, it still persists; hence, if we choose an old and hackneyed theme for elaboration, we may be apt to work it out on the lines other stories, with themes similar or identical to the one we have chosen, have been worked out. It will all be without intention, but the danger is there nevertheless. Thus, in choosing an oft-utilized theme, the writer must be doubly cautious in working out his plot.

For instance, there might come to me the theme of the young child proving a means of reconciliation between father and mother at odds. Now, literally hundreds of stories have been based on this theme, and, unless I can devise some new method of bringing the child in contact with the father and mother, some new method by which they are brought to see the error of their quarrel, my story will misfire, will not be a new story at all. The young writer, like the sentinel on duty, must constantly be on the guard that he does not allow old, worn-out themes to lull to sleep his caution and to possess him too strongly. This, of course, does not apply so strongly to the elemental themes, dealing, for instance, with the faith of woman to her husband, or the blind love of a mother for her child. Such themes are too broad and possible of unlimited development to admit of a great amount of danger. It is especially themes based on ideas or incidents with which we must be careful. Thus, if the author desires to write a story concerning the adventures of two brothers in war time, one championing one side, the other the opposite, it will be incumbent upon him to differentiate his story from those others of a like theme.

Next in order come improper themes, themes dealing too strongly of sex, or insincerely and too suggestively, together with morbid and depressing stories. This does not mean, of course, that every story based on sex and some of its intimate relations, is undesirable; it signifies only that the writer must be clean of mind when writing a production of this character, and must have noble sentiments in mind; for every story must inevitably bear the texture of the writer's very soul; all evil in him will be portrayed in the story. Many of the French novelists and short-story writers deal with sex questions and sex relations in a very daring manner, but their manner of treatment merely is analytical and serves as an illuminating illustration of the theme.

The magazines of the country, too, are aiming more and more toward the ideal and the optimistic, consequently it will be to the advantage of the writer to avoid the sensational, the morbid and the depressive. The writer should not base his stories, as did De Maupassant in "The Piece of String," on too merciless logic or on the grinding decrees of fate and cruel nature.

If he must write stories of action, let there be not a superabundance of murders, suicides, broken hearts, ruined homes, tortured heroes, and the like. Use propriety and proportion at all times, and let this emotion or that emotion, if stressed rather strongly, be offset by its contrasting emotion. If it is desired to write stories dealing with the supernatural or mysterious, the writer must be sure not to descend to the shocking and repulsive, as does Poe in a few instances. Your story might not possess the sharp tone of reality that Poe was able to impart to his. Unless told by a skilled hand, such a story might degenerate into the senselessly horrible.

The themes barred are those that offend good taste, and it certainly would be beyond the pale of good taste to argue with a neighbor over his religious beliefs, or to poke fun at another because of his race, his creed or his opinions. Moderation in everything should be the motto to shackle enthusiasm.

## CHAPTER III

### POINT OF VIEW

#### *The Purpose of Point of View.*

The reader comes to you, the author, in the capacity of an entire stranger. From the moment of the introduction, he gladly relinquishes all conscious hold on his practical every-day world. He is determined to incorporate himself into the soul and being of your hero, to think that He is this hero; hence, has all the right in the world to sorrow or fight with him. The purpose, then, of point of view is to arouse the reader to the pleasurable belief that he is seeing, at first hand, startling and revealing incidents.

#### *What is Point of View?*

Point of view is the telling of a story from some previously determined vantage point. It is an essential convention of the art of short-story writing. If it were not necessary to have point of view in a story, when produced, it would be hopelessly confused and would deteriorate merely into a babel of tongues. The story would resemble greatly a room full of people, all talking at the same time. The story would contain no suspense, no thrilling conjectures as to the manner in which the hero might extricate himself from harrowing situations, because it would already be explained by a triple or quadruple point of view just what the characters would do, because they themselves would reveal their motives and intentions.

The mechanism of telling a story is divided into three methods: first, the point of view of the main participant; the omniscient point of view; and the objective, impartial or third-person point of view. All stories told in the first person have the point of view of the main participant. Examples of stories told in this point of view are "Robinson Crusoe" and a number of Poe's short stories such as the "Black Cat" and "Ligeia." This method of telling a story is extremely effective because of the inevitable tone of sincerity coming from the use of the personal pronoun. We seem to read of the personal experience of some character who is setting his experience down just as it occurred. This method also has its defects. If the adventures through which the hero is hurled, draw too greatly upon his personal energy and resourcefulness; if he is made a shining example of the rising of man to emergency, and this all is told in the first person, the story is very apt to carry the effect of egotism. Moreover, in stories that contain stirring action transpiring at widely separated points, the hero must be rather superhuman and veritably possess seven-league boots to cover the great distance and participate in all the actions. He must be there or he cannot tell what occurs. Customarily, however, these difficulties are circumscribed by the means of letters, messengers, and so forth.

#### *Point of View of One of the Observers of the Story.*

This is the point of view customarily employed in detective stories. Conan Doyle makes an extensive use of this method, Dr. Watson



serving as the observer of all the main action. It is essential that the observer be largely a recorder of what happens and not too greatly a direct participant in the action. If he is the latter, the attention of the reader is very apt to be diverted to the part the observer plays in the story.

*The Omniscient Point of View.*

In this point of view the writer supervises and analyzes the actions, motives and thoughts of his main characters and brings one or more of them, complete in all details of heart and soul, to the attention of the reader. He knows all, he sees all, and he experiences many things which can be known only by some one who can penetrate into the utmost recesses of a person's heart and mind. This point of view is in use largely in stories of analysis, such as George Eliot's "Romola," in which lengthy tale she sketches the deterioration of the main character Tito Melema. It is this point of view that is used so largely in stories of character. To understand a character very thoroughly, we must know much of his motives, for it would be next to impossible to know what a character thinks and feels and how he reacts under certain conditions without having the power of omniscience; and if an author has this power, the reader profits thereby. The omniscient point of view, however, is seldom used in the modern short stories because ordinarily it consumes too great space in the telling. The reader must not be too greatly concerned with the motives, the thoughts, and each phase of the feelings of several characters; the action must go on, the crisis must be met and done with. We cannot linger too long on traits of character as are dealt with at length in novels.

*The Objective, the Impartial, or Third Person Point of View.*

This is the method now in use by present-day short-story writers. It admits of a swift development of the story plot. This point of view is often called the author-observant point of view. In such a point of view the short story bears a striking resemblance to the drama. In the drama the characters merely act and speak. No one stands back of the scenes or on the stage to analyze the motives which actuate the actors in accomplishing certain things. The character must interpret his own emotion without any outside influence except that coming from expression of the lineaments, the movements of the hands, and the inflection of the voice, and so forth, together with the settings of the stage. The point of view of the author-observant is exactly similar to that of the audience of a drama. The author is a mere recorder of events. He stands to one side and gives to us the action of the personages of his story, just as they occur. We must interpret from the characters' speeches and actions just what kind of people they are.

This method is unusually effective because it admits of a speedy unraveling of the plot. The reader can become greatly interested in the life of the action because the author is so far removed from the reader's thoughts and does not intrude himself upon the reader's reflection. The characters of the story have it all their own way; the author is merely the stenographer who takes down the characters' speeches and movements.



*Combination of Points of View.*

A story need not be entirely told from the omniscient point of view or from that of the author-observant. A combination of either of these elements of story telling may be used. In telling a story I may be omniscient in a restricted sense. I may delve deeply into the characteristics and the motives of one character and leave the motives of the other characters to the interpretation of the reader. This is an excellent method because it allows the reader to use his own imagination on the other characters and thereby heightens the suspense. In stories of the author-observant type, it may be well for the writer to introduce comments on life, on his characters, at opportune moments during the development of his story. We will give as an example of the author-observant type of story, interspersed with comments, a portion of O. Henry's "The Trimmed Lamp."

Suffused in the aura of this high social refinement and good breeding, it was impossible for her to escape a deeper effect of it. As good habits are said to be better than good principles, so, perhaps, good manners are better than good habits. The teachings of your parents may not keep alive your New England conscience; but if you sit in a straight-back chair and repeat the words "prisms and pilgrims" forty times the devil will flee from you. And when Nancy spoke in the Van Alstyne Fisher tones she felt the thrill of *noblesse oblige* to her very bones.

There was another source of learning in the great departmental school. Whenever you see three or four shop-girls gather in a bunch and jingle their wire bracelets as an accompaniment to apparently frivolous conversation, do not think that they are there for the purpose of criticising the way Ethel does her back hair. The meeting may lack the dignity of the deliberative bodies of man; but it has all the importance of the occasion on which Eve and her first daughter first put their heads together to make Adam understand his proper place in the household. It is Woman's Conference for Common Defense and Exchange of Strategical Theories of Attack and Repulse upon and against the World, which is a Stage, and Man, its Audience who Persists in Throwing Bouquets Thereupon. Woman, the most helpless of the young of any animal—with the fawn's grace but without its fleetness; with the bird's beauty but without its power of flight; with the honey-bee's burden of sweetness but without its—Oh, let's drop that simile—some of us may have been stung.

*The Center of Interest.*

Before deciding upon the point of view, it will be well for the writer to determine definitely with just what characters or character he has to deal with sympathetically, for one half of the charm of the story lies in the fact that it has a center of interest, meaning that one of the characters, or one set of characters, holds the center of the stage and is constantly in prominence. A story to be perfect must have a center of interest, just as a wheel must have an axle.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHARACTERS AND CHARACTERIZATION

#### *Characters Must Be Interesting.*

Most people read for amusement and entertainment, not purely for instruction. It will be well for the young writer to bear this fact constantly in mind in planning who his characters will be and what they will do. What they will be will depend largely on whether his story is to be one of action, of emotion, of setting, of idea, or of character. If of action, his characters themselves will be merely the puppets to carry along the action of the plot; while, on the other hand, if his production is to be one of character, the actors will be chiefly concerned in being, in developing, in displaying character.

But, whether the characters are merely the means to an end, or the end in itself, the writer must be sure that his characters are interesting. We admire and like to be in the company of interesting people in our every-day life, especially in view of the fact that most people are ordinary and usually lack any marks of distinction. People, as a rule, do not exert themselves or go out of their way to be entertaining and amusing to others. Consequently, it is the attraction of his actors, his people, who further his story, that the author will urge as a reason for having his story read. So the writer **MUST** exert himself to make his characters very interesting. They must continue to act without tiring, without boring, and must continue at all times to display new tendencies of major interest, or unique tendencies of well-known characteristics. If the writer fails to do this, if he is unable to make his characters much more worthy of our time and attention than ordinary people, then his story will be a failure.

If a person were taken from life and his actions reproduced just as they occurred, the narrative would be very tiring indeed. Only at very long intervals would the character engage in such enterprises, or experience an upheaval of his orthodoxies, sufficient to hold a reader's attention. Things of interest happen to the average individual only at wide and isolated intervals. In the successful story, characters must be planned in such a manner that they are constantly changing, or progressing, being acted upon by other characters or involved in circumstances and conditions that make the story. A story character must crowd into a few pages what usually occurs to an individual of every-day life in several years. Characters in stories experience a very intensive and concentrated existence. In order that the theme of the story may be presented in the briefest and most effective manner possible, the characters must constantly be "in the soup," to speak in the vernacular, until all is over and the action has been drawn to a satisfactory end.

#### *Characters Must Be Of Universal Appeal.*

To many writers will come the desire to portray certain characters of interest to some, yet not all people. One writer may desire to



write stories of interest only to women, or to men, or the constituents of a particular trade or locality. The magazines, consciously or unconsciously, greatly encourage this tendency. For instance, one magazine will request that all stories submitted be of the "society type with a denouement of such a hidden and suggestive unravelment that the reader will think its truth has been revealed to him alone and that he has been very clever in discerning it." Or another publication will want a type of stories dealing with the life of the woman on the farm; another periodical will want war stories; another adventure stories, and so on. If the writer has a predilection for writing certain types of stories and his characters are of a limited appeal, he will find numerous markets for his work. But his field will not be a fraction as broad or as appealing as that of the writer who treats of characters all of us can understand, imagine and appreciate. The thinking writer will allow his character to exploit elemental themes and emotions; if he does and his story has an American setting, then it will be read and enjoyed by all Americans everywhere.

*Characters Should Be Typical Of Certain Traits.*

The human soul is made up of a great number of abstract, moral and immoral qualities, such as, ambition, bigotry, love, selfishness, courage and faith. Each character of a story ordinarily embodies one of these abstract traits and is a type thereof. In one story the heroine will be the embodiment of faith in her lover, no matter how badly that faith be shaken. Her forte, her reason for being the story, is that she is faithful. It would not suffice that she be casually faithful, or that it be an effort for her to be faithful, or that it caused any urging on the part of some other to show to her that it would be best in the end to be faithful. Each character must possess certain traits and tendencies when he enters the action; he must still possess those same exaggerated and continuous traits when he leaves. He must be the concentrated essence of courage, of perseverance, of fear, or of hate come to life. He must live up to the part laid out for him in the story, and there must be no wavering, no doubt as to the part he is to play.

Great characters, Whitman observes, "contain multitudes." That is, the man of courage must be the sum entire of all courage, in all men everywhere. We must see clearly in his action just what he knows and understands fear to be. Becky Sharpe, in Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," typifies all scheming women; and restless, grasping, unsatisfied peasants are typified in Pakhom, main character of Tolstoi's, "Three Arshins of Land." Now, though doubtless there are legions of women who scheme to bring about certain things during their life and to whom their own welfare is omnipresent and allpressing, nevertheless there are no women in actual life who consistently and constantly could reveal the traits of craftiness and scheming so typified in the interesting Becky.

Very few people are typical in the above sense, for the reason that their tendencies along certain lines, such as love for admiration and fame, do not contain near all the qualities, in the aggregate, of a certain type. A man may be strong-willed, may evince it in various and un-

mistakable ways, but his strong-willedness is not near equal in magnitude, or variety, or consistency, to the tendencies and accomplishments displayed by all other men combined who possess this trait.

It is this display of typical traits by a story's characters that make it and them interesting. You or I may not be especially concerned in the love affair of some young High School chap of our acquaintance. But we are interested hugely in the manifestations of love taken as a whole, manifested in the person of some character evincing in the aggregate all its qualities or the potencies of its qualities. And so it is with all traits. We may not be attracted to special or trivial portrayal of types of emotion or character; but, when some particular trait is summed up in all its force and magnitude in the compass of one person, then we *ARE* interested in its disclosure, because all of us, at some time or other during our lives, have experienced the power of nearly all elemental emotions. We are so constituted, like an intricate piece of machinery of a great many parts, that we all have many traits instead of one.

But characters, to draw attention, must possess more than unity and prominence of trait. They must, above all, be individual, so that, even after having read the story, we may remember them as very entertaining personages whom we shall keep on our list of friends for all time. The ways to individualize a character are manifold. Think of several people of your own personal acquaintance, then decide just what qualities they possess, what peculiarities and habits they display, by which you especially remember and distinguish them from other people. Each of us do certain things, have certain mannerisms of dress and speech, which characteristics serve as marks of identification by our friends and acquaintances. It is these distinguishing qualities—a lisp of speech, a manner of walking, an exclamation we constantly are repeating, a habit we constantly are rehearsing in the presence of others—which make certain characters distinguishable from the other people of the story.

The writer does not need to load his characters down with individualities; they can be made too individual, and, in making doubly sure that each character will be remembered and easily identified, the writer can cause the reader to forget the story itself. Nor is it necessary to precede the entrance of each character in the story by a long description of his every detail of dress, habit and countenance. Such a tendency is wasteful, for it is by the few prominent oddities of their peculiar natures that we remember characters. Consequently, it will be incumbent upon the author to choose only those few details of a character that will fix his identity firmly in the mind. The following bit of description is very brief, but it is sufficiently pertinent and unique to impress an image of the Colonel firmly upon our minds.

“Colonel Marigold was a rosy cherub with a white chinwhisker. He carried his sixty years with a slight soldierly limp, and was forever opening his china-blue eyes in mild astonishment.”

#### *Direct Portrayal Of Character.*

Characters are pictured to the reader by two methods, the direct and the indirect. By direct delineation, we mean exposition, description, and announcements of certain characters by other characters.



By indirect delineation, we designate the methods of portrayal by the character himself in significant speech; by one character's effect upon another, and, lastly, by the action of a character. We will now take up the method of exposition, the first in the direct method of delineation. In this, the character's most interesting traits are sketched by the author. We secure an excellent outline of the character, but this system lacks somewhat in effectiveness for the reason that the character is not life-like and does not seem to have been properly introduced. The following example of the expository method is from Stevenson's "New Arabian Nights."

"Mr. Silas Q. Scuddmore was a young American of a simple and harmless disposition, which was the more to his credit as he came from New England—a quarter of the New World not precisely famous for those qualities. Although he was exceedingly rich, he kept a note of all his expenses in a little paper pocket-book; and he had chosen to study the attractions of Paris from the seventh story of what is called a furnished hotel, in the Latin Quarter. There was a great deal of habit in his penuriousness; and his virtue, which was very remarkable among his associates, was principally founded upon diffidence and youth."

Next in order is the method of description, in which the character's physical plan is sketched as briefly and colorfully as possible. As has already been said, a judicious selection of outstanding details should be chosen and sketched. Nor need all the characters be described in more than a word or two, though it is usual to have a number of identification marks for the main characters. Occasionally, however, a character is of such importance, and the physical side may have such a bearing on the interest and development of the story, that a full and more detailed description may be found necessary. But, ordinarily, characters may best be described in bits and sections, as certain actions in which they become involved bring to view their tendencies and oddities. By this latter method, the reader is not taken for too long a time from the scene of interest. Following is a bit of description from London's "Samuel," a story of character:

The sunken cheeks and pinched nose told little of the quality of the life that flickered behind those clear blue eyes of hers. Despite the minutiae of wrinkle-work that somehow failed to weazen them, her eyes were as clear as a girl's—clear, out-looking and far-seeing, and with an open and unblinking steadfastness of gaze that was disconcerting. The remarkable thing was the distance between them. It is a lucky man or woman who has the width of an eye between, but with Margaret Henan the width between the eyes was fully that of an eye and a half. Yet so symmetrically molded was her face that this remarkable feature produced no uncanny effect, and, for that matter, would have escaped the casual observer's notice. The mouth, shapeless and toothless, with down-turned corners and lips dry and parchment-like, nevertheless lacked the muscular slackness so usual with age. The lips might have been those of a mummy, save for the impression of rigid firmness they gave. Not that they

were atrophied. On the contrary they seemed tense and set with a muscular and spiritual determination. There and in the eyes was the secret of the certitude with which she carried the sacks up the steep steps, with never a false step or overbalance, and emptied them in the grain-bin.

A still more effective means of describing characters is to put their qualities in the mouths of other characters, who may be discussing the talents or singularities of the first. This manner of displaying character is unusually forceful; the author is temporarily in the background and the characters themselves, while discussing the faults or abilities of another, may unconsciously bring to light their own personal attributes. Following is an extract from Jane Austen's "Sense and Sensibility":

"I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humored as Lydia. But you are always giving *her* the preference."

"They have none of them much to recommend them," replied he: "They are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters."

#### *Indirect Delineation of Character.*

*By Speech and Its Implication.*—In moments of stress and emotion, minor or major in importance, people are rather apt to speak before they think, and from this tendency of human nature we have the warning, "If angry, count ten before you speak." But, if everyone counted ten before they spoke, we might have difficulty in discovering just what people thought of each other and things in general, for it is in moments of anger, or during other strong emotions, that a character is roused sufficiently to speak his mind, to give the key of his feelings, without restraint and without care. In such moments, the things characters say come directly from the heart without reserve: words which may have been treasured for years, which have hitherto been sternly suppressed, now that they are given freedom, rush forth tempestuously and lead rapidly to a crisis.

We learn also from the word grouping itself the manner of a character's feeling. If his emotion be that of anger, he will chop his sentences off quickly, not pausing to mince around for suitable phrases; while, on the other hand, if his feeling is that of hatred, most likely he will speak deliberately, slowly, clearly, and with dynamic emphasis. The following passage from Stevenson's "Markheim" is a conversation in which character is strongly brought out, both by the speeches themselves and the manner of speaking:

"Yes," said the dealer, "our windfalls are of various kinds. Some customers are ignorant, and then I touch a dividend on my superior knowledge. Some are dishonest," and here he held up his candle, so that the light fell strongly on his visitor, "and in that case," he continued, "I profit by my virtue."

Markheim had but just entered from the daylight streets, and his eyes had not yet grown familiar with the mingled



shine and darkness of the shop. At these pointed words, and before the near presence of the flame, he blinked painfully and looked aside.

The dealer chuckled. "You come to me on Christmas day," he resumed, when you know that I am alone in my house, put up my shutters, and make a point of refusing business. Well, you will have to pay for that; you will have to pay for my loss time, when I should be balancing my books; you will have to pay, besides, for a kind of manner that I remark in you today very strongly. I am the essence of discretion, and I ask no awkward questions; but when a customer cannot look me in the eye, he has to pay for it." The dealer once more chuckled; and then changing to his usual business voice, though still with a note of irony, "You can give, as usual, a clear account of how you came into the possession of the object?" he continued. "Still your uncle's cabinet? A remarkable collector, sir!"

And the little pale, round-shouldered dealer stood almost on tiptoe, looking over the top of his gold spectacles, and nodding his head with every mark of disbelief. Markheim returned his gaze with one of infinite pity, and a touch of horror.

"This time," said he, "you are in error. I have not come to sell, but to buy. I have no curios to dispose of; my uncle's cabinet is bare to the wainscot; even were it still intact, I have done well on the Stock Exchange, and should more likely add to it than otherwise, and my errand today is simplicity itself. I seek a Christmas present for a lady," he continued, waxing more fluent as he struck into the speech he had prepared; "and certainly I owe you every excuse for thus disturbing you upon so small a matter. But the thing was neglected yesterday; I must produce my little compliment at dinner; and, as you very well know, a rich marriage is not a thing to be neglected."

There followed a pause, during which the dealer seemed to weigh this statement incredulously. The ticking of many clocks among the curious lumber of the shop, and the faint rushing of the cabs in a near thoroughfare, filled up the interval of silence.

"Well, sir," said the dealer, "be it so. You are an old customer after all; and if, as you say, you have the chance of a good marriage, far be it from me to be an obstacle. Here is a nice thing for a lady now," he went on, "this handglass—fifteenth century, warranted; comes from a good collection, too; but I reserve the name, in the interests of my customer, who was, just like yourself, my dear sir, the nephew and sole heir of a remarkable collector."

The dealer, while he thus ran on in his dry and biting voice, had stooped to take the object from its place; and as he had done so, a shock had passed through Markheim, a start both of hand and foot, a sudden leap of many tumultu-

ous passions to the face. It passed as swiftly as it came, and left no trace beyond a certain trembling of the hand that now received the glass.

"A glass," he said hoarsely, and then paused and repeated it more clearly. "A glass? For Christmas? Surely not?"

"And why not?" cried the dealer. "Why not a glass?"

Markheim was looking upon him with an indefinable expression. "You ask me why not?" he said. "Why, look here—look in it—look at it yourself! Do you like to see it? No! nor I—nor any man."

The little man had jumped back when Markheim had so suddenly confronted him with the mirror; but, now perceiving there was nothing worse on hand, he chuckled. "Your future lady, sir, must be pretty hard favored," said he.

"I ask you," said Markheim, "for a Christmas present, and you give me this damned reminder of years, and sins and follies—this hand-conscience! Did you mean it? Had you a thought in your mind? Tell me. It will be better for you if you do. Come, tell me about yourself. I hazard a guess now, that in secret you are a very charitable man?"

"What are you driving at?" the dealer asked.

"Not charitable?" returned the other gloomily. "Not charitable; not pious; nor scrupulous; unloving, unbeloved; a hand to get money, a safe to keep it. Is that all? Dear God, man, is that all?"

Throughout all this conversation, Markheim's words are replete with a certain significance of meaning. Their meaning can be better understood when it is known that Markheim is a rogue who has several times previously disposed of stolen goods to the dealer. The expression of his face when he speaks of his errand marks him as telling a falsehood. His horror, too, when the dealer presents the glass, displays plainly that he has come on no pleasing errand; very plainly he sees in the mirror the picture of an intended crime. The mirror pricks his conscience and his words imply plainly his conflict of soul. Still further on, his endeavors to find some good qualities in the dealer by eagerly asking if he is pious or charitable, disclose that he is desperately striving to put off the execution of some horrible act.

*Indirect Delineation by Action.*—It is a truth universally accepted that action speaks far stronger than words. What a person does is what he thinks, for our muscles first must have the authority of our will; before they can move in the execution of some scheme hours or days of planning are required for its successful consummation.

The action of the characters, then, may be very suggestive of their worth and thought, particularly those actions done in secret and under stress of emotion.

*Delineation by Effect on other Characters.*—Again, we may know characters by their effect on some other person or persons. I may have met, during my travels, some remarkable man who has left a decided imprint and impression upon me. I may tell other people of the effect this individual had on me: I may defend him in an argument in which he is involved, or I may speak of his force of character, showing con-



sciously or otherwise, how it left its power fixed upon me. The piece following, from Conrad's "Heart of Darkness," will illustrate aptly:

" 'You don't know how such a life tries a man like Kurtz,' cried Kurtz's last disciple.

" 'Well, and you?' I said.

" 'I! I! I am a simple man. I have no great thoughts. I want nothing from anybody. How can you compare me to——?'

"His feelings were too much for speech, and suddenly he broke down.

" 'I don't understand,' he groaned. 'I've been doing my best to keep him alive, and that's enough. I had no hand in all this. I have no abilities. There hasn't been a drop of medicine or a mouthful of invalid food for months here. He was shamefully abandoned. A man like this, with such ideas. Shamefully! Shamefully! I—I—haven't slept for the last ten nights.' "

*Sympathetic Treatment of Characters.*—Just as the writer must tell of those phases of life with which he is most acquainted, and just as he deals with those emotions and scenes which are nearest to his fancy, so must his characters carry out unmistakably his philosophy of character as he sees it. If the writer is an admirer of some particular trait of human character, then one of his chief characters should embody that trait, for then the character will enthusiastically carry out the ideas sincerely and well. Otherwise, the character will not be true to the part set aside for him; his actions will fall flat because they will not seem to come directly from the heart, and nothing he says or does will ring true. It is important, therefore, that the writer use only those characters who will carry out his own sympathetic ideas along certain lines. If a writer set down a story when in a state of mind evil or revengeful to his friends and all the world, then his villain is very apt to appear in a relatively good light; for the writer will be in sympathy with him and will sketch the heroine or hero rather indifferently or even sarcastically; or the writer may even make a hero, all unconsciously, of course, out of his very villain.

#### *Where To Obtain Characters.*

There should be no difficulty in securing characters suitable for any and all emergencies. We need never be perplexed as to just how a character should conduct himself under certain conditions, for we have merely to place ourselves in his place and ask just how WE would act if situated likewise. Of course, characters may be secured by observation of one's friends, acquaintances, and the types one meets on the street, yet such observation serves merely as a point from which to start. Many very interesting characters there are in every locality, but the points of interest in any particular character can be only the suggestion for a story character; as has already been said, no person could be taken bodily from real life and put down into the fabric of a story simply because people are only casually representative of types.

But people, taken as a whole, have the same traits, experience the same emotions and temptations, only in each one of us certain features of character are accentuated. No two people are exactly alike, yet

each individual, dormant or otherwise, possesses qualities belonging to all mankind. Consequently, the writer himself is the best field of study. Look into your own heart and ask yourself how you would be most apt to react to certain conditions of environment.

Observation, both external and personal, is an excellent method of securing characters, but perhaps the best method of all is the imagination. We have all seen enough of life and its complications to know what is and what is not reasonable. Granted, therefore, that a character is placed in certain circumstances, we have only to exercise our imagination and our reason to extricate him to our own satisfaction and the delight of our reader.

The manners in which characters conduct themselves vary as the conditions, the environment, the locality, vary. A nervous temperament, if cooped up within limited environs, is more apt to "break loose" heavily than he would if given the limits of large areas to move in, and whose will and dictates were left unquestioned by any authority other than his own.

#### *Appropriate Names For Characters.*

The point of chief importance in devising names for characters is to use only those appellations applying to the condition and character of your personages. Your hero and heroine, if placed in a story of action, will require names signifying courage, resourcefulness, or the like. If, on the other hand, your story is one of character, your actors should be endowed with names in harmony with the traits which they embody. The name Priscilla brings up the picture of a simple, pure and dainty maiden, while the name Betty suggests a harum-scarem, jolly-good-fellow among girls. Of course, if the ludicrous is to be portrayed, a comedy character might be known as Homer or Raphael.

#### *Delineation Other Than That Of Character.*

Description of character in its various phases has already been treated of above. It will be the purpose now to deal with description of places, sounds, and the like. The writer should first impress upon his mind the fact that all description should be essential to the progress of his story. If a certain place has an important bearing on the development of the story, if it is of a nature that it radically effects the course of action, then let it be described by all means, for the clear silhouetting of its details will assist the reader in securing a firmer grasp of the story action and of the characters. But description for description's sake alone is futile as well as dangerous. In describing certain localities, the writer should aim first of all to give to the reader a certain totality of impression. In describing a scene, the writer should deal with the locality in a systematic manner. I may emphasize the device of first describing the main features of a piece of landscape; its outlines, such as the towering peak of some mountain, then the low-hanging bank of clouds, thrown into gorgeous colors by the rising sun. Then, as a closer observation is brought on the scene as the sun arises, I may sketch in tersely and graphically lesser details, beginning either close at hand or far away and drawing near.



It should be remembered that description is more than that of place. There is the bringing to the reader's mind the breathing, pulsating, living side of nature. It includes the rumble of the distant thunder, the patter of the rain, the roar of the seas, the call of the gull, and a multitude of other sounds and smells and feelings. Thus a man whom the hero of a narrative meets may very suggestively be described by saying that the hero dropped his hand quickly because of its soft clammy feeling. The hand carried the impression of the disingenuous, even of treachery.

As has already been said, two characters may interpret the same scene differently, according to their state of mind. Herewith is presented an excellent means of characterization. A view of one person's emotions may be secured by having him paint a scene optimistically, while another gives the same scene in diametrically opposite terms.

The author should aim to insert his description by a gradual process in which the most important scenes are described as the action goes on; in this manner it may be sifted in by sure, swift, effective touches.

### *Point of View in Description.*

What we mean by point of view in description is that scenes and sounds and smells should be described from the point of view of the hero or other main personage, for it is in him, his doings and reactions to the setting, that the reader is interested, and it is through his eyes that the reader will visualize the story.

The writer should aim to tell his pictures in the concrete, in terms of his own life and experience. He may do this best by appealing to the reader's sense, to his ears, his eyes, to his sense of feeling, to his smell; for it is through our senses that we are most acutely attuned to life. Above all, the writer should not describe intellectuality or attempt to interpret nature in her larger moods. Following are two excellent examples of description, brief, yet powerful and suggestive:

\* \* \* The two sleek, white, well-bullocks in the courtyard were steadily chewing the cud of their evening meal; old Pir Khan squatted at the head of Holden's horse, his police sabre across his knees, pulling drowsily at a big water-pipe that croaked like a bullfrog in a pond. Ameera's mother sat spinning on the lower veranda, and the wooden gate was shut and barred. The music of a marriage-procession came to the roof above the gentle hum of the city, and a string of flying-foxes crossed the face of the low moon.—Kipling, *Without Benefit of Clergy*.

I raised my eyes and I shall never forget the spectacle I saw. The greater part of the smoke had risen and hung like a canopy about twenty feet above the redoubt. Through a bluish haze one could see the Russian Grenadiers behind their half destroyed parapet, with arms raised, motionless as statues. It seems to me that I can see now each soldier, with his left eye fastened on us, the right hidden by the levelled musket. In the embrasure, a few yards away, a man stood beside a cannon, holding a fusee.—Merimee, *The Taking of the Redoubt*.



## CHAPTER V

### METHODS OF BUILDING THE PLOT

Plot consists of the series of incidents which present a picture of life, logical, clear and interesting. In a previous chapter we treated of the types of stories—the places, people and circumstances from which plot-germs might be obtained. Now that the author possesses an idea, a character, a setting or an emotion of which to treat and to bring out powerfully in his story, it is necessary that he devise some system whereby the theme may be developed to the climax and from thence unwound to its natural conclusion. Having his theme ready at hand, the author must establish a framework upon which to exhibit it most effectively.

Suppose the author takes as his theme the truth that man receives in genuine soul-enjoyment from the world just what he puts into it; that he cannot be so self-centered, so narrow as to love only himself or one closely related to himself and still hope to grasp life's real meaning. The author, in elaborating this theme, must construct some such working scheme as this: A father, very wealthy, loves his only son deeply and blindly; though he is wealthy, he thinks not of his neighbor nor of the misery of others; ever-vital to him is his son's welfare. So to punish him, God, through some natural agency, takes his son away from him; the father then comes to realize that there is an ulterior, loftier view of life than he hitherto had been able to vision. And the broken-hearted father accepts this truth in a Spartan-like spirit of humiliation. Such is the theme and the working plan of a famous story which we will have occasion to mention in another chapter.

Plot is not a mere change in place or time; it is not a mere succession of incidents of only casual relation to each other. Of such a mere succession of incidents would consist the daily life of most people: a business man goes to his office, transacts the regular routine of work, comes home to luncheon, returns to his work, meets a few acquaintances, has several interviews, performs more work, goes out to dinner, takes in a show, or remains home and reads a book, goes to bed—that's all. Things progress, but nothing of importance happens. If the man, however, were to go home and find his wife had eloped with another man, then discovered that the destroyer of his home had also been instrumental in ruining his business, we would have the beginnings of a plot. In ordinary life, however, the business man more likely would endeavor to settle the matter in court, and what promised to be the framework of an interesting tale more likely would end up in mere, boresome matter-of-factness. Plot, then, is not merely a succession of incidents, as a river, running ever in its natural course and never deviating from its bed; but is rather a growth, a chain, in which each incident is vitally related to every other one, while the ones which follow and precede each other are most intimately connected.

Thus, a young shipping clerk writes his name and address on the package of a box of commodities which are being sent to a distant state; the same package comes to the attention of a certain young girl, who, in a spirit of fun, writes to the young man. The letter she writes falls into the hands of the young shipping clerk's friend and working companion. The latter reads the letter to several acquaintances. They plan to write a proposal to the girl, giving the shipping clerk's name and address. Here we have incidents and situations each growing out of the preceding. The jokers of the story could not have gotten the chance to write the young girl had she not been involved in the plot by the shipping clerk's fancy, which prompted him to jot down his name and address on the packet of goods. And, upon the receipt of the letter, the girl might act in a manner still further to involve the plot. She might be an adventuress hunting for game, or a young author looking for interesting types, and so on. At any rate, she might determine to look up the shipping clerk, all unsuspecting of the circumstances shaping themselves to snare him.

From this, the author will see that as the action goes on, the relations of the characters to each other become more intimate, personal and complicated. The story rises in interest, because each situation is the logical outcome of its predecessor. Matters become more precarious for the shipping clerk, and the reader is unable to see how he is going to avoid a very disagreeable time of it explaining certain things.

Perhaps this matter of plot-building can be made still more obvious to the author if the plot is divided into its main technical parts. Thus, the plot of the story consists of the Preliminary Situation, The Climination or Climax, and the Conclusion or Denouement.

The Preliminary Situation consists of the conditions of the story at its inception. In the Preliminary Situation we are informed of the time, the setting, characters on the scene, and the incidents leading up to the story. As soon as the characters meet and move, we have the first incident. Thus, as soon as the shipping clerk had written down his name, the story was off. Everything before that, including description of the clerk, giving of time, place and condition, and so on, made up the Preliminary Situation.

The plot then progresses step by step, incident by incident, until the height of suspense, of complication, or the Climax, has been reached. Between the Preliminary Situation and the Climax, inclusive, come all the most important elements that go to make up the strong plot—the crises and suspense. Each stepping-up place on the stair of the plot that leads to the Climax ordinarily marks a minor crisis, each crisis growing in interest and suspense until the major crisis or Climax has been reached. As the story progresses, the combined crises blend their accumulated force into one grand complication—the Clumination. Each minor crisis marks the point at which the action of the plot becomes more deeply involved for one or more of the characters and during which some one emotion is brought to the fore. It may be pained surprise, as when a man finds out that his best friend has betrayed him, or the discovery by Government officials that very important state papers have been stolen.



Suspense is introduced into the plot by means of opposition to the natural course of events. Thus, let us consider again the hypothetical case of the business man who is to come home and find his wife gone away with another man. Suppose that his wife, after going a short distance on her journey of elopement, decides that she is committing a crime both against society and a faithful husband. At the first stop, she manages to send a telegram informing her husband that she will be at such and such a place at a certain hour and praying him to come get her, to save her from the consequences of the fearful act she has committed. Now the matter of suspense may here be introduced at either or both ends of the strand of complication. Thus, the wife may be prevented from sending the telegram to her husband; the man with whom she is eloping may intercept it through some clever method; or the husband, while coming home from work, may be interrupted in such a fashion that he does not get home until late, too late, in fact, to meet his wife at the time and place specified in the telegram. And, the greater the issues to be brought to a happy close, the more suspense-arousing will be the opposition which temporarily delays this happy conclusion.

Of prime importance in constructing a finely-balanced, sturdy and artistic plot are the elements of continuity and undivided attention. The meaning of these terms is self-explanatory. We have already spoken of the value of unity of impression and have cautioned the author against the use of a single unnecessary character, piece of setting, sub-plot or any one act which would even slightly detract from the most economical, while at the same time the most emphatic, elaboration of the theme. Anything which is not pertinent clogs and confuses. Every single moment the characters are not moving rapidly forward, desperately endeavoring to solve their difficulties and to extricate themselves from the net of circumstance in which they have become involved, the reader is driven to distraction, and silently implores the author to get his thinking machine back on the right course again, if only for the reader's peace of mind.

The time and manner of ending the story, together with the elements constituting a proper conclusion, have been dealt with in detail under the heading devoted to the ending of the story.

Originality in the plot involves the author's method of developing his plot-germ. The latter, usually in the form of a theme, or a queer, singular situation, may be hackneyed; however, all great and elemental emotions upon which so very many stories are founded, are hackneyed and commonplace; hence, it matters little what theme the author chooses to exhibit in his story. The great matter of importance is the way in which the theme is elaborated for its illustration in the story. If the author merely follows out the rut made by the writers who have preceded him, then already he is doomed to failure. He should choose those situations that have possibilities of greatest development; that is, that might be solved in a number of ways. The writer need be under no difficulty whatever to find a new, original way to develop his theme attractively; for the introduction of a new character, a new emotion, a different location or fresh conditions leading up to the Preliminary Situation, automatically will point out its own course;



naturally, that course will be far different from all other stories founded on a similar theme.

Often, however, the author will wish to choose for his story a certain situation which already has served as the starting point of a good many stories. Take, for example, the incipient incident of so many stories in which a helpless babe is left on the doorsteps of a house to the mercy of the persons within. One author decided to give this threadbare situation a new twist. He got around the old, feeble, ineffective development by making the house upon whose steps the babe is placed an apartment for bachelors. He then had the child discovered by three young bachelors, who, unitedly, declared themselves the rightful guardians of the bit of humanity at their feet. Any writer now will realize that wonderful possibilities had been opened up for the development of the initial situation. The future destiny of the child would be determined according to the influence, not merely one, but three, people exerted upon him. The character and the future course in life of the three bachelors likewise would be vitally changed by the entrance of the child into their orbit of existence.

Any ordinary, commonplace situation, whose constituents are reversed, enlarged or warped out of their natural order, will serve excellently as a jumping-off place for the plot. Thus, all of us are acquainted with the news item which informs us that a mad dog bit so-and-so in the leg; but I hardly can imagine that anyone has ever read, heard or seen aught of the madman who bit a dog. The circumstances are exaggerated, but they serve as an example of the possible course of procedure.

Herman Landon, writing of his methods of acquiring and developing plot-germs, gives, in part:

"I seek out a concrete object that stimulates my imagination and arouses my curiosity. I build one or two concrete objects on the foundation of that object. Having gone thus far, I cast about for a theme. An inverted process, perhaps, but I find it works pretty well."

The young author may start to build his plot in any order or from any point he desires. There will be a certain situation, idea or intention in his mind that shines out with particular light; he will then naturally develop his plot from that attractive situation or idea, whether or not the situation be of minor or major importance in the completed plot. Thus, that fascinating story, "Robinson Crusoe," might very well have been suggested by the author seeing somewhere the imprint of the human foot. Defoe might have asked himself as to the nature of the conditions under which a man would be most frightfully impressed or astonished by the sight of the imprint of the human foot. Most obviously the answer suggests itself: in a clime far removed from his own, or on an island where no one else resided, and at a time when a visitor was least expected.

As a means of making more clearly understandable to the amateur the method by which stories are resolved into the elements which constitute them, and to reveal to him the manner in which unity of impression is obtained with the greatest economy of means, we are giving here a critical analysis of "The Prodigal Son," one of Christ's parables. The parable follows, the analysis after that.

A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." And he divided unto them his living.

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And he fain would have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.

And when he came to himself, he said, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.'

And he arose and came to his father.

But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

And the son said unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

But the father said to his servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to be merry.

Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

And he said unto him, "Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound."

And he was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his father out and entreated him. And he answering said to his father, "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends; but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf."

And he said unto him, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

"It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

We will consider this parable in the light of a short story. The theme on which it is based, the forgiveness of a father for his erring

son, is of very broad appeal and of elemental heart interest. We have previously been told that unity of impression is best brought about by the use of the fewest characters possible for an effective illustration of the theme, the striking of the dominant tone at the outset and the stripping from the story all details which do not vitally concern it. "The Prodigal Son" opens with the sentence, "A certain man had two sons"; obviously, then, if the story strikes the dominant tone from the outset, it is a character story. And such it is. Now the younger son is the more important of the two sons involved because it is he who is forgiven; hence it will assist in the story's impressiveness if he is introduced at once into the story, so that the initial situation may be started on its way. And so he is. He leaves, wastes his substance, tastes life to satiety, as the story relates, finally returning to his old home. He is forgiven in the manner already recounted. The story might end at this point, for the son has been forgiven; yet the reader would not be sufficiently impressed with the power and depth of the father's forgiveness if no other character were to be brought into the story to test the true quality of the father's forgiveness. It is natural for parents to love their children devoutly. It would be nothing unusual for a father to pardon his only son in such a fashion. But, on the other hand, if he has another son who is a model of industry and uprightness, the action of the erring son is apt to be brought into greater contrast and the spirit of the father's forgiveness will receive a far greater test. Under these circumstances, if the father forgives the younger and erring son, his forgiveness will possess the broad, tender spirit as actually related in the story. That the theme of the story has thus been demonstrated, the story may come to an immediate end, as it does. The story is concluded in the father's answer to the remonstrance of his elder son. This answer is a simple repetition of the theme. The plot, as will be noticed, is utterly unencumbered by any diversities of whatsoever character. The whole plot is simple, even severe, yet the moral truth of the theme has an impressiveness which cannot be denied.



## CHAPTER VI

### BEGINNING AND ENDING

Many are the stories upon whose merit a searching ray of illumination can be thrown by the manner in which they are begun, just as we may judge people by the way in which they respond to an introduction. If a woman, when a man is presented to her, does her best to make the other easy in a company of strangers, we may reasonably guess she has a kind, thoughtful heart, while for the dashing, young, sporty chap who bows in the most approved manner at the time of presentation, his face fixed in a set, meaningless smile, we have only feelings of dislike. We know the latter's manner is merely form and that his politeness is for politeness's sake alone; his greeting is superficial and, for that reason, unimpressive. The person to whom he is introduced very likely will not be greatly pleased to renew the acquaintance.

So it is with stories. It has been noted that many young writers begin their work in a halting, constrained, awkward fashion. This comes from too little practice in writing. It is like riding a bicycle for the first time in a number of years; our balance is rather precarious, our muscles are not flexible, and, in general, we are not apt to get along very nicely.

It usually is necessary for the writer to proceed several paragraphs before he strikes a certain tone, then maintains it throughout. The writer should attempt to be neither too enthusiastic to begin his story, nor too uncertain as to just how or where to commence his narrative. Remember that the beginning is the beginner's initial bow to the public, his first strike for fame, and unless he "makes the raffle" right from the start, he will have failed before he fully realizes why.

A story may be begun expositively—by giving the main traits of the chief character or characters—by description of place, person or persons, by narrative of action, and lastly by dialogue. Of these methods the purely expository is rather old-fashioned, ineffective and largely undesirable. It may, admittedly, be interspersed properly with the other methods of beginning: thus the first paragraph may be a judicious mixture of vitally needed description, narrative and exposition. Yet, the method of introducing a story in the purely expository manner, especially if it be rather lengthy, is to be avoided. The dominant traits of a certain character will be brought out in the action or dialogue of the story, so why bother to tell about them beforehand, to make the reader wait for the vital, interesting account of adventure.

First impressions are invariably the strongest; consequently, it is up to the tyro to use every method of art at his employment to begin the story attractively. The reader is by no means obliged to read any story; he is seduced, so to speak, into doing so; and, unless the story presages well, unless he can sense an entertaining half-hour within the first two or three paragraphs, then it is all up with the author. He is designated to the Isle of Discard.

Beside being interesting, compressed, forceful and suggestive, the introduction must be very much to the point. To come to the heart of matters at once is not so difficult by the use of suggestive action or by suggestive language. A character may speak two or three lines, which, together with the author's comments, may reveal trait, tendency, purpose and past existence.

Many writers have seized upon the method of beginning the story in a manner characteristic of the story's mood. This is a very wise and a very effective device if the opening incidents or situation only can be made attractive enough. As usual, Poe opens his story, "A Descent into the Maelstrom," in a manner prophetic of the manifestation of his theme; the manner of the beginning, too, is interesting; our curiosity is aroused; we are impatient to be on with the tale, for the old man's suggestive words of what happened to him leads the reader to believe that he has a bewitching story of the "horror" type to peruse.

"We had now reached the summit of the loftiest crag. For some minutes the old man seemed too exhausted to speak.

" 'Not long ago,' said he at length, 'and I could have guided you on this route as well as the youngest of my sons; but, about three years past, there happened to me an event such as never happened before to mortal man—or at least such as no man ever survived to tell of—and the six hours of deadly terror which I then endured have broken me up body and soul. You suppose me a very old man—but I am not. It took less than a single day to change these hairs from a jetty black to white, to weaken my limbs, and to unstring my nerves, so that I tremble at the least exertion, and am frightened at a shadow. Do you know I can scarcely look over this little cliff without getting giddy?' "

If the story is one of character, is written with a strict adherence to the principle of unity of impression, it will start off with a brief sketch of the main character in some interesting posture. If the tale is one of adventure, at its inception we will perceive the hero in some thrilling enterprise or about to be involved in some perilous complication, while, if the story is one of setting, the effect of environment on the characters may have a predominant place in the introduction. It is not absolutely essential, of course, that a story of action be opened in characteristic action; it may be started off with a brief character sketch, or description, or some other device. But the writer, by striking the theme of the story in the first few paragraphs, cannot go far amiss.

An excellent method of starting the story is by lively dialogue, in which, through the course of several paragraphs of conversation, we learn of the relation and attitude of some of the characters toward each other. The following dialogue opens Miss Deland's story, "Many Waters." We learn in a few words the relation of the two men, the purpose of one of them, and the attitude both take to the initial complication brought out:

"Well?"

"True bill; I'm awfully sorry."



Thomas Fleming took his cigar out of his mouth and contemplated the lighted end. He did not speak. The other man, his lawyer, who had brought him the unwelcome news, began to make the best of it.

"Of course, it's an annoyance; but—"

"Well, yes. It's an annoyance," Fleming said, dryly.

Bates chuckled. "It strikes me, Tom, considering the difference between this and the real thing, that 'annoyance' is just the right word to use."

Fleming leaned over and knocked off the ashes into his waste basket. He was silent.

"As for Hammond, he won't have a leg to stand on. I don't know what Ellis and Grew meant by letting him take the case before the Grand Jury. He won't have a leg to stand on!"

"Give me a light, will you, Bates? This cigar has gone out again."

Concerning beginning a story with lively dialogue, a warning must here be sounded. The good story is a ladder, an ascension to the supreme enunciation of the theme. All action brings greater complication, more intense interest; woe betide the author, then, who allows himself to backslide even slightly in the onward march of his story toward its height—the culmination. The amateur may think it clever to start off with catchy, spirited dialogue, expecting thereby, without the possibility of a doubt, to chain the reader's attention to his story. Thinking, then, that the show of fireworks at the beginning of his story will insure an attentive audience thence on to the end of the script, he proceeds to explain just what brought the hero or the heroine in such a perilous circumstance. He may even digress so far as to describe the characters, to give all the antecedents, omitting not a single one, that preceded the initial incident.

But the modern reader is wary; he will not need to go very far before he will have sniffed a trap to inveigle him into finishing the story. Sad to relate, the trap rarely works, as the author will find to his displeasure. The reader is only human after all. He dislikes, as we all do, to have his curiosity piqued, then to be plunged into tiring description, exposition and narrative. The writer must, above all else, follow the natural order of interest. After the reader's interest has been aroused, it must not be shattered by spiritless detail, else he will not again be cajoled into admitting the author's trustworthiness. Either the necessary explanations must come prior to the dialogue and the initial crisis, or the conversation must be self-explanatory of what the occasion is, together with the relation of the characters. This latter is an excellent device. The personages meet, discuss problems paramount to their interests, and, by their talk, disclose their intentions, something of their past life, the circumstances leading up to the story, give a hint of the theme itself, and gradually sift in the important details which otherwise would have to be explained by the author himself. The following, from Henry James Froman's "A Doctor of Cheerfulness," is an excellent example of suggestive dialogue:



"No, Teddy"—and she laid her tremulous hands on his shoulders—"it wouldn't and it couldn't succeed. I would marry you tomorrow if I saw any hope of its coming out right, but I can't, Teddy." Tears glistened in her eyes and her lips quivered pathetically.

Even though she was pronouncing his doom, he adored her balance of emotion and reasonableness, and, secretly, he felt proud that her emotion was on his account.

"Wait one moment, Rosalind." And with a tense nervous movement he laid a protecting hand upon her arm. Just what is it exactly that is the matter with me? Say the word and I'll change it right now!"

"When you do change it, Teddy dear, I'll marry you;" and she wiped the tears from her eyes. "But I'm afraid you can't do it in a moment, and I can't do it for you. I have heard of men being cured of all kinds of habits," she continued more quietly, turning to the fire; "drinking, smoking, drugs—anything except everlasting gloom and nervous irritation. That must take time, and a man has to do it for himself."

Here in a few words we have sketched for us the relation of the man and woman who speak, their present mood, the nature of each, and the theme suggested. We know the two are in love, have been some time; that the girl is loving, equitable of nature, sympathetic, wise in her lover's moods; we find the man in despair, his dominant mood, and we receive a brief view of his nature, gloomy and irritable, as the girl herself tells him. So much having been said, the story may now proceed more actively; we may then learn in what fashion the man changed his nature. The title, "A Doctor of Cheerfulness," suggests that the girl herself will prove to be the medium of his metamorphosis.

But, as has already been said, the large majority of story openings are a combination of exposition, description and narrative. The hero may be introduced in the first paragraph or two in attitude characteristic or otherwise. A brief description of his physical condition may follow, then the author may give a few of the hero's most interesting traits and accomplishments, ending with pure narrative, made up in large of the hero's actions leading up to the first complication of the story. The following, from Stevenson's "The Sire de Maletroit's Door," is an excellent example of this manner of beginning a story. The story is one of adventure and the opening is in mood with the theme.

Denis de Beaulieu was not yet two-and-twenty, but he counted himself a grown man, and a very accomplished cavalier into the bargain. Lads were early formed in that rough warfaring epoch; and when one has been in a pitched battle and a dozen raids, has killed one's man in an honorable fashion and knows a thing or two of strategy and mankind, a certain swagger in the gait is surely to be pardoned. He had put up his horse with due care, and supped with due deliberation; and then, in a very agreeable frame of mind,

went out to pay a visit in the gray of the evening. It was not a very wise proceeding on the young man's part. He would have done better to remain beside the fire or go decently to bed. For the town was full of the troops of Burgundy and England under a mixed command; and though Denis was therew on safe-conduct, his safe-conduct was like to serve him little on a chance encounter.

It was September, 1429; the weather had fallen sharp; a flighty piping wind, laden with showers, beat about the township; and the dead leaves ran riot along the streets. Here and there a window was already lighted up; and the noise of men-at-arms making merry over supper within, came forth in fits and was swallowed up and carried away by the wind. The night fell swiftly; the flag of England, fluttering on the spire tip, grew ever fainter and fainter against the flying clouds—a black speck like a swallow in the tumultuous, leaden chaos of the sky. As the night fell the wind rose, and began to hoot under the archways and roar amid the tree-tops in the valley below the town.

#### *Ending The Story.*

The story should end the moment the theme has been clearly, logically and entertainingly illustrated—never before, never later. The effect a story has upon the reader is determined very largely by the ending; for, if the reader has gotten safely by the beginning, he, by the time the ending approaches, has forgotten the manner of introduction. Only the main salient events of the plot stand out. And, more than all else, he is immediately concerned with the final twist and wind-up of the story.

The conclusion, to be impressive, must leave the main characters well disposed of. That is, one of them must not be left hanging over a cliff or in some such hazardous position, while another is abandoned while on the verge of a momentous decision. We must be satisfied with the author's disposition of the characters, while the closing incident must be of such a nature that the theme stands forth in the mind, clearly outlined, nicely illuminated.

The conclusion of the story should never be utilized by the author as a means of moralizing on the story's characters or humanity in general. The author should not conclude by saying that "the wages of sin is death," and that that was the lot which came to the villain, continuing by observing that such a lot will come to all mankind unless it reforms immediately and takes care of its tendencies. The ending of the story should be as severely bare of all personalities of the author as the beginning or any other portion of the story. The ending should deal only with the final demonstration of the theme or the working out of the climax; it should end briefly and intensively. After the climax, the reader's suspense and curiosity pales rapidly; hence the necessity of narrating with expediteness the few events which deposit all the elements of the story in their natural positions.

In a large number of stories, particularly those of O. Henry and Edgar Allen Poe, as well as a multitude of present-day writers, the conclusion is identical with the climax. This is particularly the case



when the story is one of character alone, when the main personage makes some great decision which bears out the theme: such as a man, who, under great stress of emotion and circumstance, finally decides that duty to his country is greater than his love of self-preservation and his desire for the beautiful prospects that life holds out for him. The man's decision is at once the climax and the ending; for, after he has made the decision, we know well what his future course will be. The reader himself can imagine that and what the reader can imagine the author is foolish to write. Or, again, in the story of incident, the hero is straining every ounce of energy to reach a certain place before a catastrophe occurs involving someone dear to him. The climax and the ending very well might be the saving of the life or the rescue from the dangerous position of the other main character involved. Poe's story, "The Pit and Pendulum," is a production of this kind, in which the climax coincides with the conclusion.

I struggled no more, but the agony of my soul found vent in one loud, long, and final scream of despair. I felt that I tottered upon the brink—I averted my eyes—

There was a discordant hum of human voices! There was a loud blast as of many trumpets! There was a harsh grating as of a thousand thunders! The fiery walls rushed back! An outstretched hand caught my own as I fell fainting into the abyss. It was that of General Lasselle. The French army had entered Toledo. The Inquisition was in the hands of its enemies.

If for no other reason than that of impressing the editor alone, the story ending should have just as critical and painstaking preparation as the introduction or the climax. Remember that the editor is purchasing the story for the edification and delight of his readers, and that which fails to impress him, he will argue, should never reach the eyes of his readers. Consequently, the young author should ceaselessly contrive to end his story as simply, as intensively, as suggestively, and as rapidly as possible immediately after the main event of the story has transpired.

The conclusion has the same relation to the story that polish and cutting have to the precious gem. In both cases, the final touch brings the meaning out to its fullest realization and enlightenment. And it is just as necessary that the writer have the manner of ending his story well in mind even before he starts it. If he fails to give the introduction, the body, the climax and the conclusion of his story due regard, and fails to balance them nicely before setting pen to paper, his end is very likely to simmer out miserably. Usually, the young author takes to his writing flush with intense enthusiasm; his characters go along finely at the start; but, unless he is capable of sustained effort, he will tire toward the end, and the importance of ending with just as much spirit and carefulness will not occur to him; or, if it does, will not seem of sufficient importance.

This tendency is especially prevalent with the amateur because he has not yet learned that story writing is not a thing of inspiration and enthusiasm alone. It is a matter of persistent work, often very arduous and tiring, both mentally and bodily. Hence, the vital need of map-



ping out beforehand the relative position and the quantitative importance to be held by each detail of the story.

We present, as an excellent example of story ending, the conclusion of O. Henry's story, "The Buyer From Cactus City." The hero, a wealthy Westerner, has come to the Big City to purchase for his department store goods from *Zizzbaum & Son*. He meets, while going over the latest styles, the store's beautiful, though sophisticated, model. He falls in love with her, frankly and outspokenly. *Zizzbaum*, with an eye to business, commands the model to show the Westerner an entertaining evening about the city. The model, calmly aware of her part, agrees. The two are out that evening. While in a cabaret, the Westerner declares his love, casually stating that he is going to take the girl back as his wife, buy her a beautiful home, automobile, and so on. The girl disgustedly replies that she has "heard that before." She informs him that he is the usual type, and that she is out with him only to jolly him along and get him to buy heavily from *Zizzbaum & Son*. She must play this role or lose her job. Then the persistent and outspoken Westerner produces a gorgeous diamond ring. The girl repulses him. The two go home, and, at parting, the girl strikes her escort in the face. As he steps back, a ring falls from somewhere. Let O. Henry tell the rest:

Platt groped for it and found it.

"Now, take your useless diamond and go, Mr. Buyer," she said.

"This was the other one—the wedding ring," said the Texan, holding the smooth gold band on the palm of his hand.

Miss Asher's eyes blazed upon him in the half darkness.

"Was that what you meant?—did you"—

Somebody opened the door from inside the house.

"Good night," said Platt. "I'll see you at the store to-morrow."

Miss Asher ran up to her room and shook the school teacher until she sat up in bed to scream "Fire!"

"Where is it?" she cried.

"That's what I want to know," said the model. "You've studied geography, Emma, and you ought to know. Where is a town called Cac—Cac—Carac—Caracas City, I think they called it?"

"How dare you wake me up for that?" said the school teacher. "Caracas is in Venezuela, of course."

"What's it like?"

"Why, it's principally earthquakes and negroes and monkeys and malarial fever and volcanoes."

"I don't care," said Miss Asher blithely; "I'm going there to-morrow."

### *Tragical and Happy Endings.*

If the young writer should direct a letter to the editor of every fiction magazine in the country, asking each if he desired stories with happy endings, the answer invariably would be, "Yes, by all means."

The editor reasons that his magazine is primarily a means of amusement and entertainment; there is no more reason why the amusement afforded by his magazine should result unhappily for all concerned than that other pleasures, such as, skating or dancing, should end disastrously, with a drowning or a broken leg.

Editors must buy stories with happy endings because the people desire them almost exclusively. There is an instinct inherent in all of us which strives to realize only the healthy, the beautiful and cheerfully wholesome in life. Does not the passage of a funeral always leave a certain effect of melancholy, momentary, but real nevertheless? So it is with stories. The tragical ending is permissible only on rare occasions, only when some growing wrong must be righted or some great theme impressed upon the laggard brain.

## CHAPTER VII

### DIALOGUE

Good dialogue must be convincing in quality, must portray exactly and suggestively the character from whom the speech comes. The reader will be as quick to observe falsity of speech as he is in natural life when a person with little or no education attempts to use words with which he is not acquainted and with whose exact meaning he is in doubt.

Just as the characters are easily differentiated from each other, so must the talk issuing from the mouth of each major individual be readily distinguishable from the speech of all other characters, so different, in fact, that we may be able to identify by the speeches alone the characters to whom they belong. This does not mean, of course, that each character should carry continually with him a set manner of speech. As Arlowe Bates observes, the use of "quotation marks does not convert a passage into dialogue." There are occasions under which even a quiet individual may break into a frenzy of rage. Again, an individual backward and halting in speech may, in an emergency, rise to the severe exigencies of a situation and show that his slowness of speech is merely artificial and not innate; yet, no matter under what emotion the character may come, his speech must remain consistent with his nature in its larger aspects. No matter what a character may say, we in reading his speeches must be able to observe that it is entirely possible from what we know and understand of the man.

Dialogue should portray a character's mood. At many points in emotional stories, made of several minor and one major crises, the characters constantly will be under the influence of some stirring feelings which they must explain. It is the author's part to translate these emotions in an understandable manner and, through their enunciation, bring out the character's personality.

In a short story, the dialogue should never be allowed to digress from the development of the plot, as it does in many of the early nineteenth century novels, especially those of Dickens. When characters are allowed to tell personal experiences and to chirp on in a manner which brings out their humorous make-up, they are not helping along the story, they are merely a means of drawing caricatures for the patient and long-winded reader. Every bit of dialogue in the short story should be absolutely indispensable, so that, if any be left out, the sense of the story will be spoiled. The use of dialogue is to further, to push on, the action of the plot. The story moves by the emotions and thoughts of the characters; and, as dialogue portrays both thought and emotion, the story progresses rapidly by the correct use of dialogue.

Each speech should contain the hint of that which is to follow, for ever before us we behold the stern figure of Artistic Unity pointing out to us the way of greatest economy in handling our material. The



story dialogue may be so suggestive as to tell in a few words the relations of the characters, what brought them together, and what of importance has transpired.

*Purpose of Dialogue.*

It should be remembered, first and all the time, that dialogue is employed to make a story attractive. Life is made up of conversation among persons. Those persons would hardly be satisfied in exchanging greetings by letter. Man is a social member; he progresses by contact with other men. Hence, the liking for dialogue in stories finds its motive in a prominent element of human nature itself. Nothing is more invigorating and entertaining than living, characteristic and pregnant dialogue. As Professor Genung has excellently stated:

If in the characters is involved the profounder fibre of the story, from the management of the dialogue comes largely its more buoyant and popular effect. Uncritical readers—whose preferences, in fact, ought to be consulted—like a story “with lots of conversation in it.” The dialogue serves, as it were, to aerate the movement, which else might grow ponderous and slow. In the give and take of conversation, too, character itself appears, to speak for itself; and many accessory and descriptive elements slip in lightly and unobtrusively in the words that are said. And through it all is traceable the forward movement and the approaching end or crisis.

Dialogue in stories should be a compromise between ordinary conversation and the ideally typical. Take the ordinary conversation heard on the street, in homes and everywhere people congregate. It is too largely chaotic, haphazard and aimless for any practical use. It goes forward very slowly and even then its very end is the conversation itself. Story dialogue should not be in line with this. The character must always strive through his speeches to reveal, in the first few words, the key of the situation. No time must be lost in arguing or parleying. As Trollop very truly says:

The ordinary talk of ordinary people is carried on in short, sharp, expressive sentences, which, very frequently, are never completed, the language of which, even among educated people, is often incorrect. The novel-writer, in constructing his dialogue, must so steer between absolute accuracy of language—which will give to his conversation an air of pedantry—and the slovenly inaccuracy of ordinary talkers—which, if closely followed, would offend by an appearance of grimace, as to produce upon the ear of his readers a sense of reality. If he be quite real, he will seem to attempt to be funny. If he be quite correct, he will seem to be unreal. In all this, human nature must be the writer's guide. But in following human nature, he must remember that he does so with a pen in his hand, and that the reader who will appreciate human nature will also demand artistic ability and literary aptitude.

Perhaps if a group of people should talk continuously for an hour on a subject of interest, enough might be said to enable a writer to note down several suggestive, typical and characteristic phrases, sufficient, say, to make up a paragraph or two of dialogue. But that

would be about all. The story writer snatches typical bits of speech here and there, from his imagination, from his experience, and everywhere, then binds them together, and constructs his dialogue. The profanity, slang and dialogue of ordinary conversation must be toned down considerably, else the result will be preposterous and vulgar. "The rough neck" must not be shocking; the slang of the newsboy, utterly un-English. The reader is reading to enjoy the story, not to be startled by swear words, or disgusted by the slipshod careless speech with which he is only too familiar in his daily life.

Just as the characters themselves are typical representatives of certain traits, so must their speech portray ideally the peculiarities of these types. It is best only to choose the most interesting and instructive element of a character's speech. Let him hint to us by the manner of his talk what sort of a man he is. When he has informed us of that, we then wish only to be told what he does and how he reacts to the story.

### *Speech Labels.*

Instead of describing the manner of a person's speech as "he said" and "she said," the young author should select terms to describe the manner in which the character speaks and the emotion under which he labors. For instance, variations of "he said" are: he explained, inquired, interrogated, cackled, piped-up, stormed, snarled, suggested, hinted, insisted, gave back, answered, informed, intimated, murmured, retorted, ejaculated, protested, and so on. To have the variations in the manner of speech readily at hand, the writer will be wise to make a list of synonymous expressions and learn them thoroughly. They will help in marking out more vividly the speech of the characters. The writer should observe closely also the manner in which other writers label their speeches and profit therefrom.

We are appending four examples of dialogue, the first two from Thackeray's "Vanity Fair." Thackeray has the enviable reputation for writing more natural dialogue than any other writer. The third example is from Kipling's "Mulvaney" series, and is given to show how far one may go in giving dialect. The last one, from O. Henry, shows that slang may be free from all vulgarity and still be replete with humor.

\* \* \* \* \*

"It's only your sister, Joseph," said Amelia, shaking the two fingers which he held out. "I've come home *for good*, you know; and this is my friend, Miss Sharp, whom you have heard me mention."

"No, never, upon my word," said the head under the neckcloth, shaking very much,—that is, yes,—what abominably cold weather, Miss;—and herewith he fell to poking the fire with all his might, although it was in the middle of June.

"He's very handsome," whispered Rebecca to Amelia, rather loud.

"Do you think so?" said the latter. "I'll tell him."

"Darling! not for worlds," said Miss Sharp, starting back timid as a faun. She had previously made a respectful virgin-like curtsy to the gentleman, and her modest eyes gazed so perseveringly on the carpet that it was a wonder how she should have found an opportunity to see him.



"Thank you for the beautiful shawls, brother," said Amelia to the fire poker. "Are they not beautiful, Rebecca?"

"O heavenly!" said Miss Sharp, and her eyes went from the carpet straight to the chandelier.

Joseph still continued a huge clattering at the poker and tongs, puffing and blowing the while, and turning as red as his yellow face would allow him.

"I can't make you such handsome presents, Joseph," continued his sister, "but while I was at school I have embroidered you a very beautiful pair of braces.

"Good Gad! Amelia," cried the brother, in serious alarm, "what do you mean?" and plunging with all his might at the bell-rope, that article of furniture came away in his hand, and increased the honest fellow's confusion. "For heaven's sake see if my buggy's at the door. I *can't* wait. I must go. D—— that groom of mine. I must go."

\* \* \* \* \*

"I wish you'd remember other things as well, sir," the sire answered. I wish you'd remember that in this house—so long as you choose to honor it with your company, Captain—I'm the master, and that name, and that that—that you—that I say—"

"That what, sir?" George asked, with scarcely a sneer, filling another glass of claret.

"——!" burst out his father with a screaming oath—"that the name of those Sedleys never be mentioned here, sir—not one of the whole damned lot of 'em, sir."

"It wasn't I, sir, that introduced Miss Sedley's name. It was my sisters who spoke ill of her to Miss Swartz; and by Jove I'll defend her wherever I go. Nobody shall speak lightly of that name in my presence. Our family has done her quite enough injury already, I think, and may leave off reviling her now she's down. I'll shoot any man but you who says a word against her."

"Go on, sir, go on," the old gentleman said, his eyes starting out of his head.

"Go on about what, sir? about the way in which we've treated that angel of a girl. Who told me to love her? It was your doing. I might have chosen elsewhere, and looked higher, perhaps, than your society; but I obeyed you. And now that he heart's mine you give me orders to fling it away, and punish her, kill her perhaps—for the faults of other people. It's a shame, by Heavens," said George, working himself up into passion and enthusiasm as he proceeded, "to play at fast and loose with a young girl's affections—and with such an angel as that—one so superior to the people amongst whom she lived, that she might have excited envy, only she was so good and gentle, that it's a wonder anybody dared to hate her. If I desert her, sir, do you suppose she forgets me?"

"I ain't going to have any of this dam sentimental nonsense and humbug here, sir," the father cried out. "There shall be no beggar-marriages in my family. If you choose to fling away eight thousand a year, which you may have for the asking, you may do it; but by Jove you take your pack and walk out of this house, sir. Will you do as I tell you, once for all, sir, or will you not?"



"Marry that mulatto woman?" George said, pulling up his shirt collar. "I don't like the color, sir. Ask the black that sweeps opposite Fleet Market, sir. I'm not going to marry a Hotentot Venus."

Mr. Osborne pulled frantically at the cord by which he was accustomed to summon the butler when he wanted wine—and almost black in the face, ordered that functionary to call a coach for Captain Osborne.

"I've done it," said George, coming into the Slaughters' an hour afterwards, looking very pale.

"What, my boy?" says Dobbin.

George told what had passed between his father and himself.

"I'll marry her to-morrow," he said with an oath. "I love her more every day, Dobbin."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Eyah! They was great times. I'm ould now; me hide's wore off in patches; sinthrygo has disconceited me, an' I'm a married man tu. But I've had my day—I've had my day, an' nothin' can take away the taste av that! Oh my time past, whin I put me fut through ivry livin' wan av the Tin Commandmints between Revelly and Lights Out, blew the froth off a pewter, wiped me moustache wid the back av me hand, an' slept on ut all as quiet as a little child! But ut's over—ut's over, an' 'twill niver come back to me; not though I prayed for a week av Sundays. Was there any wan in the Ould Rig'mint to touch Corp'ril Terence Mulvaney yhin that same was turned out for sedukshin? I niver met him. Ivry woman that was not a witch was worth the runnin' afther in those days, an' ivry man was my dearest frind or—I had stripped to him an' we knew which was the betther av the tu."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Cheese it," said the Captain harshly. "I'm not hogging it yet. It's all on the outside. I went around on Essex and proposed marriage to that Catrina that's got the fruit shop there. Now, that business could be built up. She's a peach as far as a Dago could be. I thought I had that senoreena mashed sure last week. But look what she done to me! I guess I got too fresh. Well there's another scheme queered"

"You don't mean to say," said Murray, with infinite contempt, "that you would have married that woman to help yourself out of your disgraceful troubles!"

"Me," said the Captain. "I'd marry the Empress of China for one bowl of chop suey. I'd commit murder for a plate of beef stew. I'd steal a wafer from a waif. I'd be a-Mormon for a bowl of chowder."

"I think," said Murray, resting his head on his hands, "that I would play Judas for the price of one drink of whiskey. For thirty pieces of silver I would—"

"Oh, come now!" exclaimed the Captain in dismay. "You woldn't do that, Murray? I always thought that Kike's squeal on his boss was about the lowest-down play that ever happened. A man that gives his friend away is worse than a pirate."

## CHAPTER VIII

### SETTING

Setting in a story is the time, place and conditions under which the action of the story transpires. All stories possess an air of realistic distinction and tone. Setting bears the same relation to the story that the sound drum bears to the Victrola. In both cases, the lack of the developing feature of setting and sound drum will detract greatly from the final impression of the story and the music.

Dramas originally were given practically with no setting whatsoever. The old morality plays were very crude affairs indeed with regard to scenic effects and costuming of the actors. The spectator required a very sympathetic and enthusiastic nature for the plays to accept them as they were presented. In our modern dramas and musical comedies, however, everything is changed. The stage managers of the various companies vie with each other in setting their plays in veritable dreams of splendor. The characters are gowned as prince and princess born to the purple, while all settings of whatever kind are drawn with an eye to a certain effect in view. The settings are planned, above all else, to be always in tone with the theme of the story as well as the key of each particular situation. Through the proper use of setting, the short story and drama have been developed to the present distinguished and cogent standards. Some stories require only enough setting to give the story stability and to assist in the ultimate unity of impression desired. This is the case in stories based on character or incident. In such stories the setting must not be allowed to interfere with the characters and situations in which they become involved; and, even though a story be one of setting, the writer should be very careful that he does not introduce setting for setting's sake alone, but has rather a definite predetermined object in view in every place and condition described; otherwise, his story will lag and become wearisome.

Setting in a story should be given, in so far as possible, suggestively. Thus, the writer may say that the countenances of those present were blanched to a deadly white by the spectre which met their eyes.

The more lifelike and concrete a setting can be made the more believable and credible will be the resulting story. The tales of old usually began with "Once upon a time." They might have occurred anywhere and at any time. This is perhaps one of the main reasons why such stories have an air of utter improbability. We do not know where they occurred. We have no idea of location. We are in a quandary as to under what conditions the action took place; hence, our imagination is given a very severe and, in some cases, disastrous test. Either through direct narrative description or by the speech of his characters, the writer should give definitely the setting of his story. In the following paragraph, the initial one in O. Henry's "The Whirligig of Life," the author thus briefly summarizes the setting:



"Justice of the Peace, Renaja Weddup, sat in the door of his office. Halfway of the zenith the Cumberland range rose blue-gray in the afternoon haze. A speckled hen swaggered down the main street of the 'settlement,' cackling foolishly."

*Emotion in the Setting.*

Man is acted upon by the nature of his surroundings. Think to yourself of the effect that certain localities, through the passage of years, have grown to hold upon you. The sight of a certain faraway range of mountains will bring certain trains of thought into your mind. Certain impulses may suddenly spring up at the smell of a flower or the sound of a chime ringing; the impulses thus precipitated may influence radically the events of your life for a long time afterward. Suppose, for instance, that you had lived for years in a certain hilly country; that your home nestled in a pretty little valley which you had grown to love and regard as part of your very being. To continue with the hypothesis, you had always lived among friends who were congenial, sympathetic and who understood your very moods. Consider your feelings, then, if, by force of circumstances, you were suddenly snatched away from your sleepy little town among the hills and were drawn into the roaring maw of a huge city, where you saw no loving face, met no friend to speak a cheering word, and where all was strange and new. Do you not think such a new life might have a radical bearing on your thoughts and actions? Might you not in moments of desperation do the things that would be impossible to you when still within the sympathetic fold of your friends at home? This goes to show the effect environment has on the individual. How strong a hold it has gained upon an individual may be determined largely by the manner in which his nature reacts to environment. The nature of one's surroundings has a direct bearing, too, upon one's own feelings. When Old Sol smiles, man is very apt to do likewise. When gloom and chill settles over the earth, people are very apt to reflect nature's new tone and sob with her in downcast moods.

*Emotional Contrast In Setting.*

Certain settings are often used as a means of bringing out by contrast an opposite feeling or condition in the character. Thus, a character may be under strain of poignant grief. He may be drinking the dregs of utter despondency. To emphasize his feelings and to bring them out more sharply, the writer may describe the landscape and nature's various manifestations as being peaceful and tranquil. The same holds true for the opposite. Man may be happy and satisfied, while all around him the elements roar forth their anger.

*Setting As Determining the Incidents.*

Setting includes all the elements of a person's environment, all the elements of nature, of social and occupational life, business, professional, and so forth. Hence, according as a person's relation to a certain condition of setting is accentuated, so is the story determined by the setting. If I am employed in, say, a telegraph office, my actions, the people whom I meet, the doings of the day, the thoughts that come to me, are largely predetermined by the very limitations of the occupation in which I am engaged.



Stevenson says regarding the influence of setting on incident :

There are, so far as I know, three ways, and three ways only, of writing a story. You may take a plot and fit characters to it, or you may take a character and choose incidents and situations to develop it, or lastly you may take a certain atmosphere and get action and persons to express and realize it. I'll give you an example in "The Merry Men." There I began with the feeling of one of those islands on the west coast of Scotland, and I gradually developed the story to express the sentiment with which the coast effected me.

One thing in life calls for another; there is a fitness in events and places. The sight of a pleasant harbour puts it in our mind to sit in it. One place suggests work, another idleness, a third early rising and rambles in the dew. The effect of night, of any flowing water, of the peep of day, of ships, of the open ocean, calls up in the mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. Something we feel should happen; we know not what, yet we proceed in quest of it. And many of the happiest hours of life fleet by us in the vain attendance on the genius of the place and moment. It is thus that tracts of young fir, and low rocks that reach into deep soundings, particularly torture and delight me. Something must have happened in such places, and perhaps, ages back, to members of my race; and when I was a child I tried in vain to invent appropriate games for them, as I still try, just as vainly, to fit them with the proper story. Some places speak distinctly. Certain dark gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck. Other spots again seem to abide their destiny, suggestive and impenetrable.

*Influence of Setting on Character.*

Man, as has already been announced, is a creature of his environment. His aspect on life very likely will be colored by the setting in which he is placed. Zola, the French novelist, for instance, was reprimanded by Brauntiere, a French critic, for describing one of his characters as moved by the various colors mirrored in a pool of water before his house. The critic did not think it was lifelike to have a man influenced by such a trivial circumstance, but Zola and his contemporaries were more acute analyzers of the effect setting bears on character.

The business in which we are engaged, the places we visit, the things we have, all are extremely vital in determining our course of action in life. Change one and you vary the individual for a day; change them all and your personage will experience an entirely different outlook upon life. For instance, if a man is a minister, he may, by mere nature of his occupation and by no sense of morality inherent in him, be expected to act differently under certain circumstances than would a person of some other profession if placed under like conditions.

*The Part the Weather Plays in a Story.*

If the writer will reflect for but a moment, he will recall what a vast number of stories of adventure or incident were founded on some

phase of weather; upon a thunder shower, a cyclone, a snow storm of the Dakota type, or a sand storm of the desert. A typical instance of this sort is Conrad's story of the sea, "The Typhoon." If the writer has sufficient command of words to portray the sounds of the elements in distress, he has at his beck and call a very effective means of entertainment. Stories of storms or of the weather contain unlimited possibilities.

*Local Color.*

Artists especially noted for the distinct tincture of local color that their stories contain are: Bret Hart and Hamlin Garland, whose stories portray the life and manners of the West and middle West; Cable, whose stories are of the intimate southland; Mary Wilcox Freeman, whose characters portray the tone and atmosphere of quaint New England life, and so on. The stories of these and such writers are distinguished because of the local color which they introduce into their stories. They give the tone, the atmosphere, the concentrated meaning of the locality of which they write. Their stories portray effectively and unmistakably the domestic tones and distinguishing features of certain localities. All details of setting are selected in such a manner as to bring out the spirit and the pervading atmosphere of the place, while all details which do not assist in the unity of impression are rigidly suppressed.

*How To Enlarge Your Creative Ability So That  
Your Capacity For Writing Is Endless.*

The solution is simple, so simple, in fact, that by its very manifest-ness alone will it have failed to occur to the majority of writers. Most beginners are determined to have writing the art of the juggler, of the necromancer; they rather imagine that successful authors are born under lucky stars; that their horoscope has been read by some astrologer, who advised them to write; that a person's adaptability for writing is divined by a soothsayer who foresees that some day the would-be author will be winning the frenzied plaudits of the world. But the truth of the matter is, creative ability is nothing more or less than the process of constant thinking, of continual invention of plots, the endless elaboration of themes, the tireless devising of attractive situations, the illustration, in a multitude of ways, of elemental emotions.

It is sufficient proof of this statement when one considers that people who have written for some time never have the slightest difficulty in securing ideas. They have become so accustomed to habits of observation, their imaginations have been so developed, their powers of exhibiting themes so enlarged, that plot-building is no longer a conscious but an unconscious process. Do not the fingers, in certain trades, become so nimble and skilled that they can perform seeming miracles? But the brain itself is capable of being developed to a thousand-fold more nimble state than the fingers. Every plot you devise makes the next one easier, and also suggests another. And, as you proceed, as you construct plot after plot, you find that plot-building is the easiest part of writing. Never was more apt observation made than, "Practice makes perfect."



## CHAPTER IX

### STYLE

As the French academician observed, "Style is the Man." Style in writing is just as true a portrayal of what a man is—how his texture of thought is woven together—as are the actions of his life. Style is a particular method of writing and no two men are gifted with the same method, just as no two people are alike. Style is a garb of many colors, a thing of many constituents. Stories may be told in a multitude of styles. Thus, a story's style may be elegant, awkward, smooth, dull, involved, ornate, poetical, simple, melodious, and so forth, all depending on the individual who impresses on it the inevitable stamp of personality. Style is like a mirror, it reflects exactly the peculiarities of each detail of its master. If a man be nervous temperamentally, his style is sure to reflect those characteristics, and very likely will be choppy and uneven in many places. A writer of nervous temperament, too, is quite likely to have a versatile style, one possessing many different qualities.

But it is not necessary to go into a technical discussion of the elements that constitute all the various kinds of style; such a discussion is in the realm of rhetoric. It will be necessary only to sketch in the rough the main and salient features of style, for it is true that the better the style of the story, the more pleasure will it give to the reader. Yet, it is the truth that present-day stories have very little, if any, style. Out of the hundreds of stories that appear monthly in all our vast number of periodicals, but few can be said to possess a good style. Compare any of the stories which you may read in current magazines with some of the stories of Henry van Dyke, the master dictionist, whose style is as limpid and smooth-flowing as the water in a sand-bottomed brook. But perhaps just because of the fact that so many accepted stories lack good style, the writer will decide not to bother greatly about the elements of style. The writer may decide that question for himself. If he does not care to develop a distinctive and beautiful style, it may not much matter in the long run. Still, all stories must be told clearly, simply, and smoothly. The words of the story must be such as to bring forth mental images to the mind of the reader. Only sufficiently to accomplish these things is it necessary for the writer to study style. The supreme duty of every story writer is to make himself understood absolutely. To write clearly and without equivocation, and to write in such a manner that not one bit of doubt arises in the reader's mind as to what the author means, is a great task as well as a great duty.

In real life O. Henry was a very humorous and observing individual, bubbling over with good-fellowship and taking a great joy in recording the characteristic oddities of people in general. The following extract from one of his stories will reveal his humorous outlook on life. It is a fine example of the statement, "Style is the Man."



"A trust is its weakest point," said Jeff Peters.

"That," said I, "sounds like one of those unintelligible remarks such as, 'Why is a policeman?'"

"It is not," said Jeff. "There are no relations between a trust and a policeman. My remark was an epigram—an axis—a kind of mulct'em in parvo. What it means is that a trust is like an egg. If you want to break an egg you have to do it from the outside. The only way to break up a trust is from the inside. Keep sitting on it until it hatches. Look at the brood of young colleges and libraries that's chirping and peeping all over the country. Yes, sir, every trust bears in its own bosom the seeds of its destruction like a rooster that crows near a Georgia colored Methodist camp meeting, or a Republican announcing himself a candidate for governor of Texas."

To be certain regarding the effect and qualities of pure, distinctive style the writer should make a study of the diction of several of the master writers such as Dickens, Stevenson, Addison, Kipling, Poe, Hawthorne, Conrad, and so forth, comparing their style with his and ending up by striving to imitate their peculiarities of writing. In this way he may be assisted in his choice of words. Of a like method of self-improvement Stevenson says:

"Whenever I read a book or a page that particularly pleased me, in which a thing was said or effect rendered with propriety, in which there was either some conspicuous force or some happy distinction in the style I must sit down at once to ape that quality. I was unsuccessful, and I knew it; and tried again, and was again unsuccessful, and always unsuccessful; but at least in these vain bouts I got some practice in rhythm, in harmony, in construction and co-ordination of parts.

"I have thus played the sedulous ape to Hazlitt, to Lamb, to Wadsworth, to Sir Thomas Browne, to Defoe, to Hawthorne, to Montaigne.

"That, like it or not, is the way to learn to write; whether I have profited or not, that is the way. It was the way Keats learned, and there never was a finer temperament for literature than Keats."

Style varies according to the type of story to be written. Thus, in a story of swift, continuous action, the style should consist of short, forceful sentences. All ornamentation, figures of speech, and the like, must be eliminated, for all must center around the tempestuous onrush of events. If the story is one of mystery or tragedy, the style should lean to the choice of words in which the feeling of fear or horror is aroused. Thus, in Poe's story, "The Fall of the House of Usher," his sentence structure and his choice of words are such that sensations of mystery and trouble are produced, which sensations come not entirely from the fact that the story deals with elements of the supernatural. Again, in Poe's story "Ligeia," the style or choice of words plays a prominent part in bringing out tones of melancholy.

#### *The Three Qualities of Style.*

*Clearness.*—To arouse emotion in the reader, the style must be clear, for the emotions are aroused through the reason and we read by

our reason. In clearness of style are included clearness of thought and clearness of expression. We must think a thing clearly before we can express it well. To be intelligible the writer's every sentence must contain ideas clearly and logically related to each other. It would not be clear to say, "The disguised figure disappeared through the window and at that moment the officers rushed into the scene." In the same sentence two ideas are presented without any perfectly obvious relation except that of chance. The sentence should read, "The officers rushed into the scene just as the disguised figure disappeared through the window," making one part of the sentence subordinate to the other.

As an important assistance to clearness, adverbs, adjectives and pronouns should be placed carefully to modify the words and antecedents to which they are most vitally related.

*Force.*—When a writer wishes to be impressive, to be emphatic, to arouse emotion, and to stress sensational situations, he employs a forceful style. As Professor Genung observes:

"As related to the writer himself, force in style is the result and evidence of some strong emotion at work infusing vigor into his words. He realizes vividly the truth of what he says and so it becomes intense and fervid; he has a deep conviction of its importance, and so it becomes cogent and impressive. Along with this fervor of feeling his will is enlisted; he is determined, as it were, to make his reader think as he does and to make his cause prevail. Every employment of word and figure is tributary to this. Genuine force in style cannot be manufactured; if the style has not serious conviction to back it, it becomes contorted; if it has no vivifying emotion, it becomes turgid. Force is the quality of style most dependent on character."

To impart force the writer should use only those words which indicate strength, which imply bigness or swiftness of movement. He should eliminate carefully all merely superficial adjectives and adverbs so that the sentences carry the thought effectively. Force in the sentence is inherent in the sentence's arrangement. To employ a maximum of force, the main idea in a sentence should be arranged culminatingly so that it comes at the first or the last of the sentence.

*Beauty.*—Beauty means making the story a thing of delight to the ear, mind, sense of proportion, and so on. It means the elimination of all harsh words and combination of words. The use of melodious words, of alliterative words, of suggestive words, such as, "murmuring" and clash," having a strong resemblance in sound to the idea they express, are practices which lend to the beautification of a work. Lastly in the element of beauty comes the use of figures of speech, such as simile, metaphor, personification, etc.



## CHAPTER X

### UNITIES OF TIME, PLACE AND ACTION

#### *Unity of Time.*

Ordinarily, the plot of the short story is based on a series of events culminating in a single crisis in the life of one person. A novel might deal with several such crises in the life of one individual, for very few persons pass through only one; or the novel may be so involved as to encompass the crises in the lives of several personages. In the short story, however, this is not allowable, as its purpose is to reproduce a single phase of Humanity in the life of one solitary character. This crisis of the character may be treated in detail, or otherwise, according to how many words the story is to contain.

It is absolutely necessary that the short story be limited in its reproduction of life; otherwise, it will not leave an unified impression; no particular theme will be brought out with a definiteness of outline, for it would be impossible to choose haphazardly from the chaotic welter of life a series of incidents leading consistently to the intelligible illustration of some truth. No lesson could be learned from it, no theme elaborated. Hence, the short story must embrace not only a series of events, well-balanced and chosen to set forth a theme, but must likewise be closely bound together by unity of time.

We remember well those things that happen one after the other in point of time and relation. We receive thusly a continuous picture, for the events that occur all are intimately akin; they have a singleness of purpose which imprints its meaning firmly upon the memory. And, when the various events composing a story tread closely on the heels of those which follow, the illusion is more real, for all life is a constantly flowing stream of action and incident.

This, then, affords sufficient reason why the author should weave the incidents of his plot closely together in point of time. It is not necessary to show the hero in his early boyhood, and to reveal how, while yet a young boy, he was fascinated by the girl he eventually marries. Nor is it necessary to draw out a courtship through all the mazes of the wooing, proposal, preparations for marriage, honeymoon, and so on. The story should commence where the first incident of thematic significance begins and where the crisis of the main character—the crisis chosen for the story—is inaugurated. If it does not begin until the main character is well along in life, then the writer should leap into the story at that point. We are not interested in knowing what has gone before to make up the person's character. But we are curious to know what his present character is; we may even desire a few hints as to what events contributed to his present situation and outlook on life, such as: "Channing had not accepted the rebuffs of life philosophically; they had left him suspicious, sarcastic, cynical."

The author should choose those subjects which can be handled without the introduction of great lapses of time, years in length, and recurring at frequent intervals. The proper length of time for the characters to act out the story's action ordinarily is not more than one



or two years, but very many of them do not consume more than a day or two, or even an hour. The greater the unity of time in the story, the stronger will be the impression of unity left with the reader; and unity of impression is what the author is striving for.

In some stories, however, the passage of many years and the emphasis of time is the very thing from which the story draws its effectiveness. In De Maupassant's story, "The Necklace," the mere mention of the ten years and all they signify to the main characters is appalling indeed. It is from this relatively great length of time in the life of the two characters that the story takes its significance. In stories dealing with, or stressing, the passage of numbers of years, the beginner has but a poor chance of dealing adequately with the subject chosen. Stories of this character usually are stories of purpose or of idea. Such a one is Bjornstjerne Bjornson's, "The Father." The story relates, in graphic simplicity and nakedness of decorative qualities, the self-centered love of the father for his son. This is the story spoken of in a previous chapter. We will give extracts showing the passage of time.

"The man whose story is here to be told was the wealthiest and most influential person in his parish; his name was Thord Overaas. He appeared in the priest's study one day, tall and earnest.

" 'I have got a son,' said he, 'and I wish to present him for baptism.'

\* \* \* "One day sixteen years later, Thord stood once more in the priest's study.

" 'I have come this evening about that son of mine who is to be confirmed to-morrow.' \* \* \*

"Eight years more rolled by and then one day a noise was heard outside of the priest's study, for many men were approaching, and at their head was Thord, who entered first. \* \* \*

" 'I am here to request that the banns may be published for my son; he is about to marry Karen Storliden, daughter of Gudmund, who stands here beside me.'

\* \* \* "A fortnight later, the father and son were rowing across the lake. \* \* \*

"The Son threw out his arms, uttered a shriek and fell overboard. \* \* \*

\* \* \* "For three days and three nights people saw the father rowing round and round the spot, without taking either food or sleep. \* \* \*

"It must have been a year from that day." \* \* \*

### *Unity of Place.*

The average reader finds it far easier to accept the passage of time, to comprehend the lapse of one or several years between the time required to take up the thread of the story where it was dropped, than to imagine a change of scene. Thus, we may say that ten years have passed, but it is not necessary then that the story be resumed in different scenes; more likely it will be resumed in surroundings similar to those in which it was broken off. To accept a change of scene requires a great mental exercise. If every change of scene in a story demanding several shifts in locality are important, then it will be necessary to

sketch them with some clarity. The reader is thus forced to a great mental strain in order to assimilate all the details of the varied scenes; his interest becomes diffused; he becomes conscious of himself; his concentration is scattered; his tale of amusement has become an exercise of memory.

The wise author, then, will let his characters act within the smallest possible area consistent with a fitting elaboration of his theme. This may be one or two places or more, but preferably as few as possible. Of course there are some scenes in which very important events transpire, and in which the elements of setting have a peculiar effect on the actions of the characters. Such a locality must be sketched in with some detail and care. But, once the reader has mastered this scene, he should not be hurried on to another which is described with just as much particularity. If such is the case, the story will contain far too much description. Consequently, the very best method the author can employ in imparting unity of place to his works is to describe with some definiteness only the one or two main settings of his story and bring the characters back to these settings as often as possible. It will then be necessary only to mention the setting; the reader will already have formed a mental picture of the place, hence will be under no necessity of further thinking effort to establish the location.

The writer must ever bear in mind that the reader desires to become identified with the characters of the story; therefore, the constant intrusion of the writer who forces the reader to tear his attention from the consuming interest of the action of the story to the mere setting in which the various incidents take place, is aggravating in the extreme.

Let there be only a very few scenes sketched in detail; it will be sufficient to leave the other changes to the imagination of the reader himself by leaving the details of the background indefinite. If the hero goes to church, merely mention the church; the reader has his own type of church in mind, and it would be merely a waste of time on the author's part, as well as a distraction for the reader, to tell of what materials the church was composed. And, if no important events transpire in the heroine's home, it is again of no particular advantage to describe the various trappings and drapings that compose the sitting room.

Most people greatly enjoy travel; they like to visit foreign countries. They love to wonder at the beauty of far-off climes, to hear new sounds and smell strange, entrancing perfumes. But novelty of change comes easily through the eye, which immediately registers a picture on the brain without any effort on the part of the individual. To visualize a change of scene, however, is a much different matter; for the ordinary individual, it requires a distinct effort. The author, then, may easily imagine what pleasure a person might extract from a tale constantly interspersed with detailed descriptions of place and condition. So let the author decide to fasten upon two or three main localities to carry on his story; let the reader know those particular places well and even learn to love them; but let the writer merely mention all over changes of scenes as changes only. For examples, "The forest," "On the way home," "He took dinner at the inn," and "They toiled up the mountain."



### *Unity of Action.*

A story, to possess unity of action, must be concerned only with one main crisis of a character's life; therefore, it obviously is not within the ability of the short story to delineate the slow development of a character and to give the numerous incidents which ordinarily influence him to one state of mind or another. The slow development or gradual degeneration of character requires the larger scope of the novel for adequate treatment. Hence, the writer should avoid writing the story which requires the deliberate growth of character, or involves a change in character requiring the passage of years and the influence of innumerable incidents to bring it about clearly and satisfactorily. To insure unity of action, be sure to exclude all incidents which do not directly contribute to the approach and accomplishment of the main crisis. This includes the extinction of all sub-plots and extraneous characters, as well as all bits of setting and characterizations not having the realization of the theme constantly in view. Do not think to heighten the suspense or draw out the interest by introducing little sideshows into the story texture. They inevitably detract from the main issue of the plot; the story ends without having imparted a single impression; the theme of the plot misfires, and the reader has no single or dominant view of life to take away with him. Sub-plots, rather than adding to the interest in the main trend, or strand, of the plot, invariably dissipate that interest. The secret of success in the short story, then, is simplicity rather than complication and involved artfulness—simplicity in the number of characters, in the emotions which the characters experience, in change of scene, number of incidents, course of time, and so on.

By some strange and unexplainable twist of fate, people in general have been left to believe that the way of the story teller is very devious indeed; that he deals in strange concoctions of endless constituents. It is true that the elements with which he deals are many—for his realm is that of Life, the world—but his subject for each single story is only a very infinitesimal atom of existence, handled to bring out some phase of life helpfully, interestingly and intelligibly to the rest of the world.



## CHAPTER XI

### UNITY OF IMPRESSION

Unity of impression presupposes unity of conception, deep sympathy with the story and its characters and the maintenance of a general tone throughout. A story may progress logically, swiftly, and clearly from the preliminary situation right through to the conclusion, without halt or hesitation; it may be a model of well-balanced short-story structure; it may be a delight for the contemplation of a critical analyzer, yet fall short of conviction and impressionistic qualities.

In other words, there is a higher law in story writing than that of mere mathematics; there is a larger aim than a strict adherence to certain rules regarding the order of events, plot construction, characters, title, and so on. That final test of the artist in short-story writing deals with unity of impression, of imparting a certain distinctive tone or spirit to the story, according to the purpose of the author and the emotion predominant in the story. Unity of impression gives a story character, imparts to it a certain individuality that should cling to the memory of the reader long after he has absorbed the story's last word. Some people have distinguished talents or traits which particularly endear them to us. One man may be very engaging of manner, while another person may be the personification of hospitality. Those traits stand out above all others in those particular individuals. It is by those traits that they are loved and respected.

So it is with stories, based, as they may be, on a thousand different variations of emotions, characters, incidents, tones, colors, ideas, philosophies—illimitable. Each story, based upon some special emotion or idea, should be permeated with that emotion throughout; that emotion should stand out strongly through every major and even minor event of the plot as it progresses. It implies unity of mood throughout the story, unity of mood at the start, in the middle, and right up to the final reckoning.

*Author Must Have The Tone of His Story Constantly Before Him.*

It is necessary above all else that, in securing unity of impression, the author have the dominant tone of his story ever before him, so that every event and every situation be touched with it, and that every word set down be an indispensable link in the chain reaching from causation to effect. Of this effect of unity of impression to be wrought in the manuscript, Robert Louis Stevenson says:

"A skillful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. If his initial sentence tend not to the out-bringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written to which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preestablished design."

The author should go over in his mind each incident of his story before setting it to paper and determine if each one is impregnated with the spirit of a certain mood, a purposeful emotion. If not, then he must ruthlessly cast it aside; it certainly will not aid in securing a unity of impression; for, to bring about this desired effect, every event must be inevitable to the clear working out of the plot and must be in mood with all the rest of the plot-fabric.

A master in the device of securing incomparable impressionistic qualities was Poe. In his story, "The Masque of the Red Death," all bits of the setting, and even seemingly insignificant bits of the story have been considered for their harmony of mood. The mood is one of mystery and tragedy which comes to a band of thoughtless revellers. The tone of the story is brought more sharply in contrast by the gayety of the party. Poe strikes the tone of death and tragedy in the very first sentence of the story. I will give passages from the story to illustrate how well Poe has the mood in hand and what materials he utilizes to best bring it to the reader impressively.

The "Red Death" had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal—the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. \* \* \*

But in the western or black chamber the effect of the fire-light that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes was ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered, that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all.

It was in this apartment, also, that there stood against the western wall, a gigantic clock of ebony. Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang; and when the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep and exceeding musical, but of so peculiar a note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians of the orchestra were constrained to pause, momentarily, in their performance, to hearken to the sound; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions; and there was a brief disconcert of the whole gay company; and, while the chimes of the clock yet rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation. \* \* \*

The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. \* \* \* But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. \* \* \*

\* \* \* And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony



clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flame of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

In Poe's story, "The Fall of the House of Usher," the unity of impression is wrought out in like manner. Every element of setting is permeated with the inextinguishable and gripping breath of the supernatural; from beginning to end the whole story fairly reeks of it, and the reader cannot leave the story without carrying a singleness of impression.

*Why Enthusiasm is Essential.*

A prime requisite for the obtaining of unity of impression is that the writer be enthused with his materials; that is, be overjoyed with the prospect of writing a story of a certain type. Thus, a person may experience a keen delight in reading and writing of a courageous, generous, resourceful man who is involved in very strenuous and complicated happenings, who plays the part of worshipper to beautiful woman; whose stirring efforts are crowned with success after very persistent fighting and continuous combat with forces of evil; who, in fact, is the very type of "hero" so dear to the hearts of those who are charmed especially by the moving story of action. If the author delights in writing stories of incident, or stirring adventure, then he inevitably will approach his subject with a certain avidity to be at it and to start his characters off on their perilous voyages. And, throughout the whole narrative, he will deal with his characters and their troubles, their loves and their triumphs, in a tender, enthusiastic manner; he will be one with them in spirit and body; he will give himself entirely into them; and, dominated by the one supreme purpose of injecting enspiriting and dashing contention into his story, he will have no end but one in view—to make his hero a hero above all others, to make his heroine admired and loved and feared for as no other ever has been. And, in so doing, he will forget to digress; he will have no desire to philosophize on some extraneous matter of small purpose to the ultimate aim of the story. Every incident, every bit of setting, of character, will be devised with the purpose of making the hero more heroic, of bringing out some trait, such as courage, so that when the story has been drawn to its conclusion the reader will know, without doubt or conscious thinking effort, that some particular emotion has been very decidedly aroused and that that emotion has been pleasurable.

Another writer, however, will not wish to write adventure stories. He is not in spirit with a Stevenson, a Dumas, a Scott. If he should write an adventure story, no particular emotion would be aroused in the reader, for the writer himself would not be sufficiently possessed of any single dominant emotion to be brought out in the story, to impart anything of distinction to the story; it would be merely a stilted performance of puppets with no surging battles to fight, no great things to contest wholeheartedly for.

But this same writer might have a desire for the character story. If so, in such a story would his desires best be displayed in unity of impression. He might have in view the reaction of some character to temptation as brought against a certain strong sense of duty—the



temptation, or its indulgence, and the duty, running toward exactly different ends. The dominant tone of such a story would be the portrayal of the hero's struggle with self.

And so on. From which it is clearly seen that before unity of impression may successfully be attained, the writer must be informed unmistakably of just what tone he wishes to render, and this may be determined by the kind of story to be written, together with the effect to be accomplished.

*The Reader's Acceptance of the Author's Dominant Tone.*

Some people's dreams are as real as the things that make up their every-day life. Even their imaginings and fancies possess an air of reality, which, when viewed in retrospect, may seem to be recollections of actual experiences. Such people will write admirable stories drawn entirely from the imagination. They will believe in their stories; they will give themselves up without reserve to their elaboration; the story will possess, then, a tone of sincerity and unity of impression.

Take, for example, the ghost story; the beginner is advised against writing of the supernatural or the mysterious if he is too out-and-out a disbeliever in anything which smacks of the unreal; if he cannot be tolerant of the supernatural even for amusement's sake. For such a person to write a ghost story would bear an analogy to the mathematician touching his figures with an element of romance. He could not do so and retain confidence in his subject. I speak of this with regard especially to the ghost story, for the reason that just exactly the same error has been made in the past. Anne Radcliff in her novel, "The Castle of Otronto," attempts to explain the mysterious sights and sounds which impart such a delightful atmosphere of mystery and expectancy to most of her books, by resorting to the discovery of some mechanical device that caused the noises and the strange sights. The effect is not to be mistaken. Very evidently the author did not think that the reader would care to accept the strange events of her story without the proverbial grain of salt; yet, in administering the salt she has spoiled the effect of the story entirely. A writer anxious to give his story unity of impression would have left the cause of the mystery unexplained in such a disappointing and prosaic fashion.

The average reader dislikes exceedingly to be disappointed when he has taken it for granted he is to be pleased. And, if a certain personage of a story is especially pleasing to the reader, if this person's conduct and nature is of such calibre as to endear him more and more to the reader as the story progresses, then the reader is going to be a discomfited and enraged individual indeed if affairs turn out badly for the beloved. Hence arises this rule: If the expectations are aroused in a certain direction, that direction must be maintained un-deviatingly throughout. If the story is to be one of light and airy romance, it must not end in tragedy; while, on the other hand, if the story is to be one of melancholy, it must not possess too prominent and disquieting strains of joyous humor, for then the contrast will be too strongly sketched and the reader will not know what effect was to be rendered.

The author, then, from the first sentence, if necessary, must strike the dominant tone and emotion of his story, just as Shakespeare did

in Hamlet and in all the rest of his plays. Throughout some run the deep, persistent tones of tragedy, offset only here and there with swift, expert, running touches, by bits of appropriate contrast, yet not sufficient to detract or throw the reader from the pervading tone. Another sketches the humorous character of an alehouse, say the laughable Falstaff; and, in such a one, Shakespeare does not make the mistake of startling the reader by introducing incongruous tones.

*Every Story Must Be Distinctive.*

It will be well to recall to the prospective writer at just this point a certain state of mind peculiar to the average reader. The reader, as a rule, is a very generous sort of person; if he votes to read an impossible tale of romance, of fantasy or of adventure, he is ready heart and soul for the very worst the author is able to do with his characters, provided, of course, that the characters remain true to type and do not perform out "of character" or as humans might be expected to conduct themselves. In the act of starting some particular story and going ahead with it, the reader tentatively agrees to accompany the author upon any cruise of fate, to whatsoever climes the story may carry him; he is eagerly prepared for the highest flights of fancy, provided the reader strikes that tone from the outset and gives the reader assurance that the story is one of fancy and will not, without warning, change into a domestic tragedy.

To bring out this point more strongly, let us compare two stories, both romantic in a general sort of way and both containing the element of love. We will consider "Aladdin's Lamp," from the Arabian Nights, and "The House Opposite," a tale in dialogue by Anthony Hope. In the former production, the reader accepts the wonderful adventures of Aladdin as a matter of course. It is no matter of surprise to the reader, after he has been informed of the tone of the story, to be told that at the mere rubbing of the wonderful lamp Genii appeared to carry out the most wild demands of their master; we are prepared for all that comes and even take a delight in following around the hero. Nothing the hero could do or could have done to him would surprise us in the last, for we are momentarily anticipating some genii to appear and perform still greater feats. Nor do we lay the story aside, having finished its perusal after an hour of pleasurable emotions, with any feeling of disgust or unbelief. Of course, we do not imagine for an instant that any such miracles could take place or ever did. Yet we admitted, during the actual reading, that they might, and in that silent agreement with the author did we read his production.

In the other production, "The House Opposite," is brought out a little characteristic peculiar to most people: that of forgetting the romance of their earlier days after they have become settled down to the staid humdrum of house and home. This story deals very delightfully, very humanly, in a manner very true to life, with just this trait of character. The action is unusually trivial. A young lady merely slips out of her boarding school and meets by chance a young man who resides in "The House Opposite," a young man she has seen before and often silently admired. The two go to a soda fountain where the heroine spends a shilling given her to attend a certain lec-



ture. Everything is very commonplace, very plausible, very like happenings that might and doubtless do occur many times during the lifetime of every individual. The tone throughout is quiet, humorous and romantic.

Now consider in what a stupefied condition the reader would be hurled if, during the stroll of the two young people down the street in the direction of the soda fountain, there should have appeared three horrible, distorted genii who should have demanded that some incredible feat be demanded of them to perform. Would the reader accept it; would he be likely to go on with the story? If he did, it would be with the intention of seeing just what was the matter with the author and of ascertaining if further marks of insanity could be discovered.

*The Importance of Setting in Unity of Impression.*

Of inestimable importance in imparting unity of impression and emphasizing the key of the story is setting. For stories of action or incident, there is no better setting than the deep forest, the raging flood, the sea, the city's streets in the dead of night, the battlefield, and so on. And for stories of romance the appropriate background is the dance, perfumes, flowers, moonlit evenings, gardens, the female in distress, preferably in some suggestive and stirring place, the lake steamer, the canoe and so on in unlimited variation. All such devices of setting tend to give the impression of love, of the tender heart, of susceptible emotions, for it is through our senses that we are most visibly effected. We all have heard, doubtless many of us have felt, the subtle influence of the moon on a summer's balmy evening. It is for these reasons that the harmonized elements of setting are so invaluable. The reader can be made to accept the tone of a story far more readily when there exists no incongruous elements of setting, when the author has not been so careless as to lay his tale of romance in too uninviting and meaningless a location. Just consider for a moment how the story of mystery, of dark and unfathomable doings, can be strengthened in suspense and emotional height by the introduction of the moaning wind, the dashing waves, the swishing rain, the sighing of the trees, and the like. But it is largely the story of adventure and the story of setting that will require the greatest selection of details for bringing out the unity of impression most effectively. A story of character will not require great attention to setting, only in so far as character is effected by environment. And a story of idea will demand still less adherence to strict selection of striking and harmonious setting effects for the purpose of bringing out more strikingly the author's supreme purpose.

It will be seen from the foregoing that unity of impression occupies a very important niche in the realm of story writing. Unity of impression very often is the thing that decides for or against a story's acceptance. One story may be a splendid model of cleverly devised and constructed plot complication, but an editor on reading it may not be particularly impressed; it will not remain fixed in his mind; rather, he will promptly forget it and the writer will wonder why his story did not get by. Another story, simple in plot and dealing with commonplace incidents, may be so permeated and suffused with the author's all-prevalent themes, be so impregnated with the author's



enthusiastic treatment of his main, dominant, underlying purpose and idea, contain so much of charm because of its harmony of tone, that the editor instantly and avidly will accept it.

The patient author, therefore, will determine well beforehand just what impression he desires to create in the reader's mind. And, as it must be the very emotion, together with its application to the human side of life as exemplified in the story, that the author has in his own mind, it is inevitable that the reader should receive exactly the same meaning, the identical spirit of the theme; for the reader gets just what the writer gives, so much and no more. As much art and as much feeling as a story contains, just that proportion of delight does the reader experience. Story writing is an excellent mirror for the reader to look into the author's heart and read there of the power of his emotions and the sincerity of his convictions. The sea receives as much volume of water as comes to it from the streams which flow down to meet it; the reader obtains as much sense, as exact a quantity of emotion, of enthusiasm, as the author is able or sees fit to inject into his story. The writer will do well to bear this truth firmly in mind. If he has assimilated all the rules of story writing and follows out the various injunctions given in this volume, yet his work persists in returning, then he has only himself to blame. It is only because the charm of his subject has not seized him with sufficient power for him to impart strong emotion, dynamic play of forces, delicacy of touch and sincerity of tone to his work.

In this, as in all phases of story writing, we advise the author again in that very trite, but sensible way, to read the master writers for shining models of unity of impression. We especially recommend the stories of Edgar Allen Poe, Hawthorne, De Maupassant, Stevenson and Kipling. Their works are especially prominent because of the harmony of tone of their stories. This probably is so because these authors recognized the value of unity of impression, strove after it and attained it. And, without a particle of doubt, it is due in main to unity of impression that so many of their stories have charm and proportion, a single dominant emotion brought out fittingly at every forward step of the story.

## CHAPTER XII

### HOW TO CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE TITLE

With regard to the point of time at which a title may most judiciously be chosen, whether before or after the story has been written, no absolute rule can be fixed. Some writers find they can decide with greater facility upon the best title for their particular script after all the constituents of the plot have been grounded firmly in their minds. The theme then shines out with greater meaning—luminous, apparent, exact. Or, again, the very uniqueness of the situation forming the main interest of the story may be so unmistakable in the concrete terms which explain it, that the proper title will come readily and unbidden to the pen. Still again, the title may sum up in a well-considered phrase the thematic importance and pith of the plot, though at the same time the cleverness of word arrangement and the significance of the words selected should portend a far different treatment of the theme than was ever before attempted.

There even are people, places, phrases and ideas who and which, in themselves, suggest excellent titles, hence it may be said that the title itself may often prove the foundation of a story. Consider what a multitude of suggestions tumble forth at the mention of the title, "The Man Without A Country," or "The House of Offense." Give either one of these titles to any number of persons who never had seen the stories to which they pertain, and it would not be exaggeration to say that not a single one would interpret the title exactly the same as the other.

There are several reasons why great caution should be exercised in the choice of the title. Chief among them is the effect, good or bad, the title is bound to have upon the editor; even though the reader never looked at the title of the story he intended reading, if only to impress the editor it would be well worth the beginner's time to labor assiduously until he had found the exact title to fit his particular production, one that would bring out the plot's crux, its big appeal, in the most startling, yet not sensational, manner. Editors and editorial readers are human just as the rest of us. If a manuscript comes before their attention bearing a title that means little or nothing, which brings up no definite mental picture in the mind and possesses no conciseness of aim, then they are very apt to cast the story in the pile with the rest of the rejected. The editor argues in this manner: Surely, if the writer has not enough perspicacity to devise a new, catchy title, then it would be a waste of time to wade through his stuff; nine chances out of ten the plot is just as uninteresting as the title. And such is the truth of affairs. Set before an editor a manuscript that possesses a heading guaranteed to make him gasp for breath by reason of its novelty and appropriateness—and the manuscript is half sold! The editor's interest has been aroused, his favor has been gained, he is predisposed toward the story, and will read it in a broad, indulgent,



receptive frame of mind; and, if there exists in his mind any doubt concerning the salability of the production, he may even, and kindly, suggest changes to be made, or buy the script outright and perform them himself.

The good title possesses several essential requisites. It should be short, apt, original, specific, compelling. The long title usually tells too much and is too cumbersome. It should be terse, meaty, epigrammatic, easily remembered. Perhaps the greatest requirement of the title, though, is that it be original. Take the average person who is an extensive reader of the popular magazines. What is the story he usually decides to read? What factor does he allow to bear the greatest weight in his selection of his evening's enjoyment? Let the beginner consider his own experience as a reader. Has it not been his custom to run a finger down the table of contents and choose that story which, by its title, holds promise of having the quickest action, the most original and unique situations? Most assuredly. After all, the title is merely a device to tickle our curiosity. We all are seekers after novelty, excitement, sensation or the intensely emotional; consequently, if any title cleverly intimates that the story for which it serves as ambassador has plenty of these heart-gripping elements in its unfolding, we are very apt to read it.

In addition to originality, the correct title should be specific, as opposed to general. The reader wishes to have some hint concerning the character of the story before he reads it, for few people plunge blindly through the contents of a magazine. Surely no one could obtain such intimation from a title so general as "His Reformation." Such a title conveys only one definite idea: that somewhere, somehow in the course of the story, someone is reformed. The ordinary individual is not sufficiently desirous of reading about reformation in general and in such indefinite guise, to go ahead with the story. Reformations are of a thousand different hues and possibilities; they might take place in any corner of the globe and be enacted under an unlimited diversity of conditions. Such a title, then, is as general as life itself and the abstract qualities which compose life. The story with "His Reformation" as the title might contain the element of love; in that case the title "Love" would apply just as well as the other. Indeed, it might apply better, for the reformation could be brought about by a man's love for a good woman. In that event it would be the part of the author to express in a single, short phrase the main peculiarity of just how the woman helped or inspired the man to reform. The writer is then approaching the center of the story's difference and claim to originality, the point wherein lies the story's distinguishable freshness.

The method of taking the title from the name of the chief character has long since gone out of style, not so greatly with novels as with the short story. So many novels, but especially those of the past century, were studies of the gradual unfolding of character; so the title could, with some show of reasonableness, be the name of the main character. In retrospect the title was specific because the character whose name it was, held the main center of interest throughout the novel; the reader had obtained a unified impression of one main character, pre-



dominant above all others; so the title seemingly was applicable. It lacked, however, any power of capturing the prospective reader's interest, and, in these days, when so many thousands of short stories are being published, there naturally must exist among authors quite strenuous effort to outdo all others in the freshness of their titles—in the appeal they carry. Consequently, while they were prevalent in the past, the writer of short stories will do well to avoid such uninteresting titles as: "Marjorie Daw," "Romola," "Tom Jones," "Ligeia," "Schlemihl," "Amos Barton," and so on.

Akin to the title giving the name of the chief personage is the title in which the hero's or heroine's name is coupled with some descriptive term, intimating the exact situation in which the hero becomes involved—some peculiarity which singles him out for especial attention, the place where the main events of the plot occur, and so on. Examples of the adjective-name title are, "Black Silas" and "The Patient Griselda." Of the titles having the chief character's name coupled with the main situation of the story are: "Peter Rugg, The Missing Man," "The Shyness of Shorty," "The Americanization of Roll-Down Joe," "The Madness of Philip" and "The Ordination of John Fairmeadow."

In many stories, chiefly those of setting, the titles are chosen from certain places, or their peculiarities, in which the action occurs. Of such, are: "The House on the Beach," "The Mystery of Witchface Mountain," "The House of a Thousand Candles," "Up the Coolly" and "The Great Stone Face."

Especially effective are those titles that are the names of concrete objects contained in the stories, objects that take an all-important part in the working out of the complication. The more common this concrete object is, the more familiar people are with its nature, the more likely they are to remember the story it heads, for the reason that the story and the concrete object, imaged firmly on the mind, remain irrevocably associated. Examples of such titles are: "The Monkey's Paw," "The Mask," "The Scarlet Letter," "The Piece of String," "The Black Cat," "The Turquoise Cup," "An Extra Blanket" and "The Black Pearl."

Lastly in this category of titles come those based upon an idea, preferably the theme of the story. Examples of such are: "Where Love Is, There God Is Also," "The Lost Word," "The Other Wise Man," "The Man Without A Country," "The Call of the Wild" and "The Law of His Nature."

We will treat here very briefly the enigmatical title; the title which is so very puzzling, yet withal so very inviting; which seems contradictory of its very self, as "The Living Dead Man," yet suggesting a very engaging story. The enigmatical title is excellent in the hands of the expert; but, if the amateur dallies with it, his titles are more likely to be meaningless, a mere jumble of words; for this sort of title must be written with several aims in view: it must conceal effectively the story's main peculiarity, it must be very interesting, and must meet all the other requirements of the title with regard to length, etc. Examples of such titles are: "They," "The Man Who

Was," "The Suicide Club," "Pigs Is Pigs," and "After He Was Dead."

He will be a wise author, too, who proportions his title to the kind and amount of interest in his story. Consider how disappointed and outraged a reader would be if drawn to read a quiet little character sketch, or a story of setting, by reason of a very inviting, almost sensational, title, which would have been an excellent caption for a blood and thunder tale, but very much out of place as title for a character story. The writer's title, then, should arouse no more pleasurable anticipation than the author comfortably can satisfy through the telling of his story.

As an exercise in choosing interesting and appropriate titles, the reader should reflect on the aptness of the title after he has read a story. Let him study the theme, then ask himself what he would have named the story. In writing his stories, too, the beginner should choose not one title merely, but many of them; then he may choose the best of all.

## CHAPTER XIII

### STORIES OF MYSTERY

#### *The Detective Story.*

Many of the readers of this book will be especially fitted to write detective stories, stories involving the untying of a knot that seemingly has worked itself into a helpless jumble of strands leading nowhere and incapable of any sensible solution. For their benefit we are appending an analysis of the detective story, and pointing out just where it differs, in mechanism, from other stories.

As the reader doubtless will recall by casting his mind back over the many detective stories he has read, this type of story follows the principle of ratiocination, or the deductive method, that procedure of reasoning which considers certain elements at hand and from them forms an opinion, or solves some puzzling situation. Therefore, the usual detective story starts off with a deep puzzle. A man has been murdered, a young girl has disappeared, the family jewels have dissolved, seemingly into mid-air, important diplomatic papers have been spirited away. The complication to be solved is set forth in the first few paragraphs; the remainder of the story concerns itself solely with the method of finding out why, who and where; it consists of resolving the complication to a sensible conclusion.

The more unusual the theft, the more bizarre the disappearance, the more meaningless the murder, the greater the reader's anxiety and eagerness to follow the mode of procedure by which the mystery is explained. Suppose a man is found murdered in his apartments and it is known that he had not an enemy in the world; we will assume he possesses no great amount of wealth or abilities which might make him a source of envy to any individual, and that he has always been disposed to sacrifice himself for the comfort of others. The problem is: who killed the man and for what reason was the crime committed? There are absolutely no tangible reasons, no visible signs of a struggle, no slightest clue to work upon; the most imaginative fail to conjecture a plausible reason why this particular man should have been struck down.

When the mystery is accentuated in this manner, when the crime consummated has no plausible motive to actuate it, then the reader's curiosity is very apt to be piqued to an extreme degree. The greater the mystery to be solved, the greater will be the reader's fervor in following the method of the individual who attempts to find the solution.

The author, however, must not commit the mistake of starting off with a very promising mystery to be solved and then allow the detective to triumph by any ordinary or un-heroic means. The pleasure that the reader derives from the detective story rests largely in the enthralling adventures, chases and clashes the detective falls into, the setbacks, seemingly unsurmountable, that he comes face to face with,



and the very ingenious methods he resorts to for a solution of the problem.

In some detective stories, the conclusion has not been reached even after the criminal is apprehended, for not yet do we know all the details of his capture and the brilliant maneuver of the detective in trapping his victim is not clearly revealed to us. Hence, the detective must tell, usually in his own words, as a conversation to a friend or accomplice, the manner in which he finally seized the criminal. Other stories of the detective variety are concluded immediately upon the confession or capture of the criminal or criminals, for the method by which the hero solved the mystery is explained step by step just as it occurred.

It will be wise, occasionally, to allow the reader to get a look ahead into the story so that he will realize faintly just what is coming before the author allows the detective himself to know. To reveal some coming movement of your plot to a reader in this manner is very complimentary; the reader pats himself on the back for being more clever than the detective himself. This device is useful because it puts the reader in a receptive and kindly mood toward the author. You see, the reader himself is taking an active, positive part in your story just as much as the hero; hence, the former should be allowed the liberty, every now and anon, of doing a little detective work himself and of flattering himself that he is a wee bit wiser, a trifle more profound and penetrating, than the detective. And inasmuch as the individual reads the story to derive pleasure from it, why not?

It must not be supposed, though, that all detective or mystery stories have criminals to be run down, or that a man found dead has been killed by some human agency. The detective story based upon some accident, upon the scientific, or upon a unique move of fate, has been in vogue for some time and countless numbers of them, excellently and plausibly presented, too, have been published. A man may be killed in a multitude of ways, the author must remember; any agency that will deprive a person of breath or of food or other means of existence, takes his life. A character might be killed by the agency of some gas, generated in some odd manner and disappearing almost immediately after the character's demise.

All the criminal characters of the detective story need not be reprehensible, vile, loathsome, dirty, atrophied individuals, embodying in their appearance the evils which they seem to delight in. The more intellectual and innocent in appearance the criminal, the more educated and faultless in conduct, the greater will be the conflict between the two forces involved: one to keep the mystery unsolved and to prevent the approach of just punishment, the other to ferret out the criminal and triumph over the latter's fabrication of evil.

The author might do well to study several representative detective stories, especially those of such writers as Conan Doyle, Arthur B. Reeve, Anna Katherine Green and Edgar A. Poe. The last author named presents the mystery of his story, "The Mystery of Marie Roget," thusly:

This event occurred about two years after the atrocity in the Rue Morgue. Marie was the only daughter of the widow

Estelle Roget. The father had died during the child's infancy, and from the period of his death, until within eighteen months before the assassination which forms the subject of our narrative, the mother and daughter had dwelt together in the Rue Pavée Saint Andree; Madame there keeping a pension, assisted by Marie. Affairs went on thus until the latter had attained her twenty-second year, when her great beauty attracted the notice of a perfumer, who occupied one of the shops in the basement of the Palais Royal, and whose custom lay, chiefly, among the desperate adventurers infesting that neighborhood. Monsieur Le Blanc was not unaware of the advantages to be derived from the attendance of the fair Marie in his perfumery; and his liberal proposals were accepted eagerly by the girl, although with somewhat more of hesitation by Madame.

The anticipations of the shopkeeper were realized, and his rooms soon became notorious through the charms of the sprightly grisette. She had been in his employ about a year, when her admirers were thrown into confusion by her sudden disappearance from the shop. Monsieur Le Blanc was unable to account for her absence, and Madame Roget was distracted with anxiety and terror. The public papers immediately took up the theme, and the police were upon the point of making serious investigations, when, one fine morning, after the lapse of a week, Marie, in good health, but with a somewhat saddened air, made her re-appearance at her usual counter in the perfumery. All inquiry, except that of a private character was, of course, immediately hushed. Monsieur Le Blanc professed total ignorance, as before. Marie, with Madame, replied to all questions, that the last week had been spent at the house of a relation in the country. Thus the affair died away, and was generally forgotten; for the girl, ostensibly to relieve herself from the impertinence of curiosity, soon bade a final adieu to the perfumer, and sought the shelter of her mother's residence in Rue Pavée Saint Andree.

It was about five months after this return home, that her friends were alarmed by her sudden disappearance for the second time. Three days elapsed, and nothing was heard of her. On the fourth, her corpse was found floating in the Seine, near the shore which is opposite the Quartier of the Rue Saint Andrees, and at a point not very far distant from the secluded neighborhood of the Barriere du Roule.

*The Supernatural, or Horror Story.*

In the telling of the story of the supernatural, a device is involved which, if it be not taken into account, will leave the author's "ghost" story lusterless. This device is that of making all the mystery, the causation of the horror, an "unknown" quantity, a thing of Doubt. The reader must not be allowed to catch a view of the thing from which springs the horror of the story, else all suspense will collapse with great dispatch. Unless the author is very clever indeed he will

not be able to explain away an anachronism of Nature which he actually allows to appear before the eyes of several people. Rather he must leave his ghosts, his strange noises, his weird wailing and gnashing of teeth, to dark, empty chambers where gruesome murders have been perpetrated, to dank, winding cellars and underground chambers, whispering forests, eerie moors, or to mysterious deserted battlements of partly dismantled castles, their proper breeding places. But the illusion of suspense and horror is broken immediately the reader KNOWS just what it is that causes the furor of terrible emotions on the part of the characters, and, incidentally, the reader himself. The reader may know eventually just what the mystery is, but that is the end of the story; after he does know, he is no longer interested in that particular story, for his curiosity has been fully quenched.

Some horror stories reach their conclusion without the Unknown being seen or explained; the interest lies wholly in the fact that the hero or heroine escaped the loathsome influence of the terror, or braved its presence for one ever-to-be-remembered hour. The hero may look into the dark chamber and his fingers may clutch spasmodically at the thin air, his features may blanch slowly and his very blood may seem to congeal, yet the true form of the unspeakable, if it have any, must remain a mystery to the reader. The main personage of the story may be so horrified by the spectacle, or the cold hand that touches his face, or the terrifying events which occur to him, that he is unable to tell what caused them, even if he knew, and, by this inability to articulate his experiences, will the suspense of the story be maintained.

The master of the horror story is Poe. By a close scrutiny of his mystery stories, the student will learn much of the method employed in effectively devising and building up the materials of the horror story.



## CHAPTER XIV

### YOUR OWN LIFE IN YOUR WRITING

Writers should not tell of things about which they know little or nothing! Don't write of a foreign country if you have never been there, or if you are not an omnivorous reader of the customs, history and atmosphere of those particular parts. Lew Wallace, author of "Ben Hur," never saw the Holy Land previous to writing his book dealing with the scenes of Palestine. That his book, however, is faultlessly true in every detail is due to the fact that he studied for years the most authoritative documents, parchments and books. He delved into the most obscure sources; he was determined to fix in his mind as firm a picture of the manners and spirit of the Holy Land as if he had been indigenous to that country. George Eliot is said to have read three hundred books concerning past Italian life before starting "Romola."

So it has been with hundreds of other writers. Edgar Allan Poe never made a balloon ascension, but, in his short story, "Hans Pfaal," he bases his plot on specific elements, and lets not his pen be moved by such idle breezes as moved the gas bag of the hero. He took into consideration every principle by which the upper stratum of our atmosphere is supposed to be made up; he argued sensibly and logically, though rather fantastically, and when the reader puts down the book he is convinced that Poe dealt with the scientific phases of the story in admirable fashion. What made Bobby Burns so famous? It is not his Scottish brogue, though that does have a twang that tickles. It is not his choice of words, though in that respect he is especially strong. Rather it is because he broke away from the stereotyped custom of his time, which custom was to write of a fountain, a sunset, or a falls. He wrote of the things that made up his daily life, of his experiences in the meadows, while plowing or roaming the fields and woods; he wrote of the little denizens of the field, of the simple little blossoms which held hidden meanings for him, of the drunken brawls in which he took so large a part, of his conquests of his lady loves. Burns wrote poetry, 'tis true, but the principle is the same, for it can be applied in just this fashion to the works of Jane Austen, who rarely stepped over the limits of her own village and had to draw for her fund of knowledge from her readiness to observe the people who visited at her home, so many of whom make up the characters of her books.

So, you see, it is not of the foreign climes we should write, unless we are particularly fitted to do so. Remember, our writing is a hundred times more facile, racy and appealing when we tell of those things which are part and parcel of us, because in writing of things close to our hearts we are very apt to deal more familiarly, more enthusiastically, more sympathetically. Our work, our home, and the people we know, the people and the things we have seen and on which

we have passed our observations should be the foundations on which we raise our efforts. The actions of the characters of a story may and should be fiction, but let the influences that move the characters be true to life and fortified and restricted by reason, observation and a philosophy of life. Without the check of reason, imagination degenerates into fancy.

The author is strongly urged to write of those things that are his hobby, his delight in life, and weave around them the action of his story. Sir Walter Scott received his inspiration in writing from the border tales of old Scotland, tales that were crooned to him on the knee of his old nurse. They made vivid pictures in his mind, so a very large portion of his books contain more or less reference to those early impressions.

Perhaps one of the best ways to inject the breath of life into your work is to employ as the underlying idea of your plot some incident that has taken a large part in your own life and existence, something that has revolutionized your viewpoint on life and actually placed you in a new sphere of thought. Look back upon your life, go over the years carefully and find out those things that have made each year a thing of wonder and whose accumulative effect have made a different person out of you. Then you will be writing of things which interest us all, because we cannot think of you as far different from the rest of us.

*The Three Processes Of Refining Your Story After  
The First Rough Draft Has Been Made.*

Before dealing with the revision of the story, I will take up first its actual writing. First of all, the efficient and systematic, the sure and careful, author will make out an outline of his plot. All important events, even of minor value, will be included in their natural order. In pursuance of this regular outline form, a series of minor crises will show distinctly their relation to each other, how crisis three dovetails neatly into crisis two on one end and crisis four on the other.

The story itself, a matter of from two to five or six thousand words, should be written at two, never more than three, sittings. If the author has every detail of his story firmly impressed in his mind, and, if his outline is in good working order, there is no reason why he should not write a couple of thousand words at one sitting. The benefit to be derived from such a concentration of effort is manifest. An invaluable totality of effect, with a smoothness and logic of movement, is attained in this fashion; otherwise, these indispensable qualities might be lacking. Thus, the author might proceed as far as the last crisis leading to the climax, then tire out. On returning to his work the following day, he might not be able to launch into the spirit of the story, especially at the emotional height it had attained just before he broke off his writing the day before. In such a case, the climax would fall flat, lack point and thrill.

Thereby follows the suggestion: scribble off the first draft of your story as rapidly as possible. Adhere to your outline, but do not endeavor as you go on to keep all the rules of correct writing always before you. Simply write your story as the outline unrolls to your



pen each succeeding incident ; tell the story in your own words without a thought of style or effect. Become as interested as possible in the movements of your characters, incorporate yourself wholly into the texture of the story as you write it. Do not worry about rules or technicalities. Leave them to the polishing process, of which we will now speak.

After the first rough draft of the story has been completed, the story should be viewed with regard to the unity of impression obtained. This would include the injection into the story of the elements treated under the chapter heading, "Unity of Impression." The story must be predominantly adventure, character, setting or otherwise, as the case may be. But the totality of effect gained must be as clearly distinguishable as the difference between Gothic and Moorish architecture.

After the writer has carefully revised his work with regard to unity of impression, the story should be very closely scrutinized for all alloys of insincerity and lack-lustre. The two greatest wrongs the story plot can commit are those of being insincere and lacking in suspense. If the writer's heart is not in his work, he cannot write sincerely ; if he knows or cares little of what he attempts to tell others, his words will not ring true, will not seem to be based on actuality. He must, then, if his story lacks sincerity of emotion, inject the unadulterated product and no imitation, for the reader refuses to accept substitutes. He must, if at first tempted to write of the idiosyncracies of society folk, though he may know little of their real thoughts, motives and characterizations, resolve to deal entirely with more familiar and simpler folk.

As to suspense, the arousing of exaggerated anxiety concerning the outcome of certain complications can best be brought about by the addition of still more opposition. This does not mean that the story should be made longer, but simply that the bitter struggle of the hero to attain his goal should be magnified more often by reverses and heart-rending repulses. If it is necessary to add other material, rather than lengthen the story, the writer should cull out some of the incidents leading up to the climax or to the main opposition. By doing this and strengthening the opposition or the suspense, he succeeds in plunging into the story precipitately, just as the reader most fervently wants him to.

The last process of revision will include the elimination of all redundancies of whatever character. This culling of the superfluous will apply to all parts of the story—to the beginning, description, exposition, dialogue, ending, characterization, and so on. For there are certain characters for whom the writer will have especial fancy and regard. The writer will be so taken up with their personality that, all unconsciously, he will too greatly stress their part in the story, and what started off as a story of action may suddenly shift into one of character. The same applies to setting and to ideas. Some writers will fall into the habit of preaching to their readers ; others will consider certain places in their script as excellent points at which to bring out certain opinions or illustrations that have always been more or less fascinating to them. But the writer must determine to be severely



economical. He must weigh each incident carefully, asking himself if the story could proceed swiftly and clearly if it were eliminated. If its detachment from the story leaves no perceivable void in the action, then it would have deteriorated from the value of the story to have left it as it was. The writer, too, must as ruthlessly eradicate all phrases to which he leans kindly. He is apt to inject them on all occasions; they, by constant repetition, come in time to mean nothing.

The careful consideration of all these elements in the revision of the manuscript will heighten its value and salability by many per cent.

#### *How To Refreshen Your Imagination.*

As has already been stated, trains of thought are started in the mind by the impression of sights, sounds, smells, and such, acting on the nerve centers which convey the records to their particular places in the brain. These impressions, when they arrive at their destination, excite to life other impressions close by. Thus a train of thoughts is aroused and thus is explained the sudden flow of ideas at the smell of a certain flower. The brain is a vast maze of associated ideas; the perfume a wife used in the days of her courtship, when suddenly encountered at a later day, will bring back pleasant memories to a husband.

So an excellent way to stimulate the imagination is to keep the senses ever on the alert—to see all the beautiful things that life holds, the brilliantly-hued pansies, the modestly-gowned violets—to listen with intentness to all of Nature's murmurings, and to interpret the erratic changes in the whine of the wind as we would interpret a certain character by his moods.

#### *The Mental Tonics That Successful Writers Employ.*

Nearly all writers get their ideas under different circumstances. Balzac arose at midnight and took a long draught of the hottest, blackest and strongest coffee obtainable. "H. G. Wells," says Tit-Bits, "is one of those fortunate individuals, who brim with ideas. His collection is so great that no pen could clothe them with stories in a life-time. He gets his ideas at night, and then brings them down to breakfast in the morning, where he dictates them to his secretary." F. Marion Crawford got his ideas on foot. To think out a novel, he would often walk forty miles. The imagination of Stanley Weyman gets warm and lubricated by the sound of running water; therefore, he does his writing in a house-boat. Robert Hitchens' thoughts do not begin to flow until he has his pen in hand. De Quincy wrote under the influence of opium, while Stevenson received a multitude of ideas for his stories from the coastline of Scotland. Frankly, however, it is very doubtful whether any of this extraneous paraphernalia was absolutely necessary to assist these various writers in securing suitable ideas. I believe that they liked to live under such odd circumstances and to indulge in such peculiarities. We all have desires for certain locations, positions, atmospheres, conditions, and so on. Consequently, if we are placed as near as possible in an ideal location our ideas are bound to apply more logically to the theme at hand, and we will write on in a harmonious, contented fashion.

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**PART II**

**THE NEW IRVING METHOD  
OF WRITING PHOTOPLAYS**

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PHOTOPLAY DEFINED AND EXPLAINED

Numerous attempts have been made to define the photoplay. Most of the definitions have been unsatisfactory, however, because ambiguous. The simplest definition possible is: *a story told in pictured action instead of words*. That is to say, a photoplay is a story told almost entirely in pantomime by actors, whose thoughts and motives are brought out by their actions. As a rule, it is necessary to assist the actors with some worded description thrown on the screen. This combination of action with a few words is a photoplay.

All moving picture subjects are not photoplays. In many instances, moving pictures consist of a series of scenes exhibited for education or information. Witness the Burton Holmes Travelogues or the Pathé Weekly. Here there is no story to be told. Therefore, there is no photoplay, for the photoplay is the modern way of telling a *story*.

The average magazine story often consists largely of description and conversation. Some of the best passages are almost entirely word-pictures without action. This is not photoplay material. The photoplay must be all action, because it appeals to the eye alone. We might define the photoplay, then, as *a story of the eye*.

But it is best for the beginner to consider the photoplay as a *story* told in *action* instead of *words*. And this little word *action* should be kept constantly in mind; it plays an important part in photoplay writing.

#### *Why There Must Be Action In a Photoplay.*

In stage stories we see a character enter the scene and say: "It took me all of two hours to get here from my office. The streets were so crowded it was almost impossible to move. I had a terrible time." Then he relates his experience. This all happens in one scene on the stage. But, in a photoplay, it would take several scenes to picture the same thing. We would see him leave his office, see him go down the street, follow him through it all, including even his arrival at the club. But, on his arrival there, he would *not* relate his past experiences, as in the play, but would proceed to carry out some *new action*.

So it becomes plain that the one big requirement of the photoplay is action. In fact, the whole plot is told almost entirely in action. Occasionally, a few words of explanation—a few brief sentences, a telegram, a photograph—are thrown on the screen to explain some phase of the story not made clear by the action alone; but, in the main, action tells all.

Let the reader think of the photoplay as a pictured story in which action, gestures, facial expression and elements of character replace the dialogue and description of word stories. The person who sees a photoplay must find it a simple matter to identify all characters, to know what type of people they are, just what they aim to accomplish, and whether they win or lose. He must thoroughly understand the plot entirely from what he sees the characters *do*, with very little

explanatory matter. In fact, it might almost be said that a perfect photoplay should consist *entirely of action*; for, in perfect pantomime, words are not needed. Often, however, the printed matter thrown on the screen serves to heighten the artistic finish of the play; therefore, even though it be possible, it is not altogether desirable to omit all explanatory matter.

The important thing for the new writer to remember is that, in photoplay writing, he must depend entirely upon his ability to *make his characters act*. Dialogue and description are the story writer's tools. The photoplaywright must work with action.

In the photoplay, we have the nearest approach to the perfect entertainment—that in which the individual is under no mental labor, not having to gain the thoughts of the author through words. On the contrary, the photoplay's entire plot smoothly unfolds itself as if by magic before the spectator in the form of a continuous, easily-understood story, at times given added attraction, variety and strength through the written word. In story writing, the constant aim of the author is to bring up images in the mind of the reader. All of the author's words must be arranged in such a clever manner that the reader becomes unaware of them and imagines that he is the actual actor in, or sole spectator of, the gripping events depicted. The ability to carry the reader away in this manner comes only through careful study. In the photoplay, the author does not encounter this difficulty.

As previously stated, many stories are not suitable for photoplays. This is because they consist so largely of the abstract, description and word-pictures. They lack action, and action is the stuff photoplays are made of. Photoplay characters cannot dream of the past or of the future. They cannot be philosophers or witty conversationalists. They must act. They must do things. They must keep moving without an idle minute.

But your characters should not run wild. A great many beginners imagine that, in order to have action, they must keep their characters constantly on the jump from one city to another, from America to Europe and back again, just to keep them frantically engaged. It seems childish to say this, but anyone in touch with new writers knows the necessity of warning them to keep the action of their characters confined to a limited area. There are two extremes of action. One in which the characters travel all over the world, or nearly so; the other in which they are confined to a single room. While it may be possible to write successful photoplays containing one or the other of these extremes, still it is not a desirable thing for the beginner to attempt. The new writer may well content himself with the happy medium.

Don't imagine, either, that action means events of a violent nature. It isn't necessary to tear down buildings or destroy cities to secure action. It is possible to write innumerable interesting, entertaining plays around peaceful, quiet events. Moods, motives, thoughts, feelings—all may be expressed in the photoplay. Still there must be life, action, movement.

In truth, the photoplay is a "moving" picture.



## CHAPTER II

### THE COMPONENT PARTS OF A PHOTOPLAY

In all fiction, plot is one of the most important elements. Plot is the story itself. Without plot there is no story. But, in the photoplay, plot has even greater weight than in any other kind of writing. This is because the photoplay does not permit description or character drawing, as we know both in stories. Take plot from a photoplay and little remains. There is no action, for you cannot have action without cause and effect—without an orderly arrangement of incidents and situations reaching a climax—and *this* is the very essence of plot.

Plot, then, is of paramount importance. Before you can interest an editor in a plot, however, you must have some way of presenting it to him—some clear, comprehensive, understandable form in which to tell your story briefly and attractively. To do this in a thorough manner, the complete photoplay must be divided into four major parts or divisions.

#### 1. *The Synopsis.*

The first division is called the synopsis. Here the writer outlines, in a comprehensive manner, all of the action in his plot. The synopsis is a general view of the story; an abstract or summary of the action; it tells the story in detailed, narrative form, without dialogue or useless description.

In the synopsis, your characters are identified and mentioned by name, so that the editor knows who and how many they are. But, in addition to presenting your characters in the synopsis, you must also arrange them in order of their importance in the second major division of the photoplay, called the *Cast of Characters*.

#### 2. *The Cast Of Characters.*

The cast of characters, or cast, as it is usually termed, is a list of all the people who appear in your play, together with a few brief words describing the main characteristics of the major characters. The characters should be arranged in the order of their importance, the main character coming first and the others following in an orderly manner. The cast should immediately follow the synopsis of your story. This completes the second main division of the photoplay script.

It may be well to note here that the first and second divisions of the complete photoplay script—synopsis and cast—are all the writer sends to the producer when submitting his work for sale.

#### 3. *The Scene-Plot.*

The third division is the scene-plot, which consists of a brief outline of the various scenes, or “sets,” used in your script. The scene-plot shows the editor or producer exactly how many different scenes are needed, how many different interior or exterior settings he must use, and how many scenes are to be photographed in each setting. The scene-plot is used only in the studio when the script is actually being produced.



#### 4. *The Continuity, or Scenario.*

The fourth division of the complete photoplay script is the continuity, or scenario, as it is frequently called. In the continuity, your plot is not told in narrative, as it is in the synopsis, but is worked out in *action*. That is, your plot, instead of being told by description, is outlined as a series of actions, just as it appears on the screen, together with all of the necessary reading matter, such as, letters, photographs, newspaper items, quotations, and the like.

In other words, the continuity is a succession of scenes, exactly as they are worked out by the director, put into action by the characters, and photographed by the cameraman, together with all the titles and inserts appearing on the screen.

So far as the beginner is concerned, he need concern himself only about two of the four parts indicated above: synopsis and cast. Editors prefer to receive manuscripts merely in detailed synopsis form, together with a cast. No continuity is wanted. It is desirable, however, for the writer to acquaint himself with continuity writing so that he may have a comprehensive knowledge of what is possible in photoplay writing. Furthermore, if he masters the art of continuity writing, he will be equipped to accept a position as staff writer in any studio.

Remember, then, that the manuscript submitted by a "free lance" consists of only two parts:

- I. Synopsis.
- II. Cast of Characters.

And that the complete photoplay script, actually as produced in the studio, consists of four parts—two of which are written in the studio after the script has been purchased from its author:

- I. Synopsis.
- II. Cast of Characters.
- III. Scene-Plot.
- IV. Continuity, or Scenario.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PHOTOPLAY PLOT

Before the actual writing of the four principal parts of the photoplay is described, it is desirable to get a thorough knowledge of just what constitutes a photoplay plot. This is desirable for the reason that the actual writing of a photoplay cannot begin until a plot is first worked out. Furthermore, plot-building is by far the most important phase of photoplay writing. If you cannot build plots, you cannot write photoplays.

#### *What Constitutes a Photoplay Plot.*

A simple way to define and explain the function of plot is to say that plot portrays struggle in all of its phases. Struggle is the chief factor of plot. One character, or several characters for that matter, want something. They try to get it. Someone, or some thing, resists the efforts to obtain the thing desired. The delineation of these efforts—sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing, here changing in plan, there surprising the antagonist—is said to be plot.

The photoplay plot is life pictured on the screen. As every one knows, life is made up largely of struggle or conflict. Therefore, plot should be a record of struggle. That struggle may be a combat between the forces of the individual and nature, as it is in so many of Victor Hugo's novels. Here the hero or heroine is fighting against the forces of fate. Or the struggle may be between the moral forces of a single character. Thus in Stevenson's "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," there is a struggle between the characteristics of the same individual. In this story, the struggle between the good and the bad becomes so powerful that the demon of bad and the angel of good are personified. In a recent film adaptation of a religious novel, the main character, a minister, is found struggling against his awakening conscience, which tells him to follow in His steps, to take up the sword against the evil forces of his conscience—a struggle only too long neglected. Again, the struggle may be between mere physical forces, as it is in so many of Jack London's stories. Here the main character, a beast or a man, struggles against some hereditary enemy. In Robinson Crusoe we see man struggling against nature—the sea, for food, for shelter, against beast, cold and hunger.

The photoplay plot, then, is a record of struggle, a history of conflict—man's struggle with nature, man against man, man against society, man against temptations. This is really *life itself*. Every great book or work of the ages deals largely with conflict. Even the Bible is a history of struggle—the struggle of right against wrong. All life is a conflict—never ending.

There cannot be plot unless there are complications, which must be worked out and fully cleared away before the story ends. Many beginners have the idea that a mere series of events, closely connected perhaps, but not involving any change, or crisis, in the lives of the

characters, is plot. Not so. A mere chain of events does not make plot. Suppose Frank, our hero, joins the Aviation Corps, goes to France, works hard, becomes a great birdman, wins praise, and returns home. Is this plot? Most assuredly not, although it contains excellent plot material. But—let Frank meet an old enemy in France! Ah, at once we have plot! Complications arise, a big crisis may occur—in short, there approaches STRUGGLE, the ultimate solution of which constitutes a real plot.

Whatever the character of the struggle, there must be contest of some sort; for the photoplay without some clearly defined and original conflict—that is, a struggle occasioned by new motives worked out along new lines—is not a photoplay at all. It is a play without a plot. When struggle ends, a mere uneventful chain of events begins.

*Plot a Simplification of Life.*

Robert Louis Stevenson once advised story writers in this way:

“As the root of the whole matter let him bear in mind that his novel is not a transcript of life, to be judged by its exactitude; but a simplification of some side or point of life, to stand or fall by its significant simplicity. For although, in great men, working upon great motives, what we observe and admire is often their complexity, yet underneath appearances the truth remains unchanged: *that simplification was their method, and that simplicity is their excellence.*”

This applies equally well to the photoplaywright. The real method of every art is simplification. It should be the duty of every photoplaywright to simplify life. He first should select his essentials from the great kaleidoscope of life, then arrange them in an exact, detailed manner. In evolving a plot, the photoplaywright should select only those events having a close relation to every other, and arrange them in a certain pattern according to cause and effect.

*Unity and Motive in the Photoplay.*

Every good photoplay is a unit. Unity is a prime structural necessity in the photoplay as it is in any work of art. And the only way unity can be secured is by forming a definite idea of just what is to be accomplished and the determined focusing of attention on its accomplishment. You should exclude from your thoughts all things that do not pertain directly or indirectly to the end you have in view.

Since it is the aim of the photoplaywright to portray a series of events closely related to each other, it is easily seen that he cannot do this unless all extraneous matter is eliminated. For this reason, it is wise for the writer to select a motive—a good reason for the different things happening in his play. To use the words of Stevenson again: “Let him (the writer) choose a motive, whether of character or passion; carefully construct his plot so that every incident is an illustration of the motive, and each property employed shall bear to it a near relation of congruity or contrast;—and allow neither himself in the narrative nor any character in the course of the dialogue, to utter one sentence that is not part and parcel of the business of the story or a discussion of the problem involved. Let him not regret if this shortens his book; it will be better so; for to add irrelevant matter is not to lengthen but to bury. Let him not mind if he loses a thousand qualities, so that he keeps unflaggedly in pursuit of the one he has chosen.”



Stevenson had story writing in mind when writing the above; his words apply equally well, however, to the photoplay writer. In every photoplay there must be a good reason for every act. Any situation without an underlying motive is valueless. Writers often overlook this. They frequently allow their characters to meet in various places and under certain desired conditions without showing any good reason *why* they should be there. In other words, many events in their plays just "happen" for the author's convenience in developing his plot.

For example: Two characters plot in a secret conversation. A third character, while passing, overhears their plans. This would work out all right providing there was *a reason why* that third character happened along when he did—providing there was a *motive* back of it all. Without the motive, the whole business becomes mere absurdity.

So no one of your characters should perform any act, no matter how insignificant, unless there is a motive back of it. Of course, it is much easier to let characters "do things" without motive; but plots developed in such a lazy manner seem too artificial. And the minute you adopt this easy-going style of writing, you cease to interest—you even become offensive to ordinary intelligence. To be convincing and satisfying, your entire story must be dominated by a powerful motive. If there is a motive, cause and effect will take care of itself; without motive, your characters will lose themselves in a maze of absurdity.

#### *Why Structures Are Important.*

But no matter in what manner you work, you will find that most good manuscripts are completed before they are written; that is, they are completely worked out in the author's mind before he sets them down on paper. This explains why, when viewing a good photoplay, we always feel as though the author is taking us to a definite place, that we are "getting somewhere." Of course, it is impossible for us to foresee the ending, still we know in our heart all the while that the *author* has carefully planned just what the ending will be. This conviction produces deep interest on the part of the audience.

Why are photoplays so popular? Find your answer by looking at life itself. What is life? Not a great deal more than a jumble of events leading "every which way." Life is usually a mix-up. It lacks a neat pattern. It does not proceed in an orderly, processional manner. The average person thinks that some wizard, or God, alone can understand the future. In seeing a good photoplay, however, the average individual is always satisfied that the author knows what is going to happen next, that he knows what to-morrow will bring forth, that he thoroughly understands the direction in which everything is progressing; he seems to know all. Hence, he makes life interesting because he makes it orderly, systematic, understandable. He accomplishes this in no small degree by his constructive ability.

#### *The Simplest Form of Plot.*

The most elementary plot possible would be one in which a series of events proceeded logically and without interruption along a single strand of causation. Here, the first event would be the cause of the

second, the second the cause of the third, and so on to the culmination of the series. This simple form of plot is frequently employed in Boccaccio's "Decameron." This style of plot certainly is logical; but such a style would never do for most photoplays because it is too childish. It would be a case of going to the extreme. In fact, such a plot would not, in a large sense, be a real interpretation of life—and the portrayal of real life is the aim of the photoplay. It would not portray life because it would not show the definite shifts from one event to another. It would fail to exhibit the complications of real life. In other words, a simple plot like this is too straightforward to be interesting. It is too regular. It lacks suspense.

*How to Create Interest and Suspense.*

The easiest way to make your plot interesting and more interpretative of real life is to introduce negative elements—to usher in events tending to retard progress and make it difficult for the characters to accomplish their desired aims. In doing this, you not only create suspense and make your plot more interesting, but you also emphasize the ultimate victory. These negative and hindering elements are not extraneous; they hinder the progress of events, but they also help matters along through their failure to stop them.

The events in a well-constructed plot may, consequently, be roughly divided into two classes; direct, or positive; indirect, or negative. By a direct event is meant one helping the progress of the plot toward the climax. By an indirect event is meant one tending to arrest progress.

Life is made up of conflict and victory. So by introducing elements tending to retard temporarily the progress of your plot, you portray life as it actually is.

Half the charm of a good photoplay lies in not knowing what is going to happen next. If the people of an audience know how your play is going to end, they are no longer interested. This state of suspense—uncertainty, anxiety, or expectation—should be kept in mind all the while you are developing your plot. Introduce unexpected "twists," little surprises, minor climaxes, so that the audience will be kept in a constant state of uncertainty.

In scene fifty-three of "The Countess Charming," the Model Photoplay in Part III of this book, we have the beginning of brief suspense created by the uncertainty as to whether Betty will or will not recognize Julian as the "Countess." In scene sixty-nine, we have the beginning of more extended suspense as to whether Julian will be caught in his "stealing." This runs all through the play and keeps the audience guessing. Suspense is further complicated in scene seventy-five and also in eighty-five.

In your desire to create suspense, do not introduce into the first part of your plot events likely to mislead the audience into thinking that they have bearing on the ultimate climax, when they have absolutely no relation to it. On the contrary, the little events all through your play should indicate, in a vague way, how it *might* end; but, as previously stated, you must not let the audience "see through" your story. There is a vast difference between being prepared for an event and anticipating it.



Always remember that suspense is an indispensable element in photoplay writing. If you use it properly, you will find it the most valuable asset in writing salable manuscripts.

### *Complication in Plot.*

The simplest form of plot is the weaving together of two separate series of events. The simplest way to weave a series together is to join them in a common culmination—even though they be widely separated at their beginnings. This common culmination, or climax, might aptly be termed the major knot.

For example, consider "Silas Marner." Here the culminating event is the redemption of Silas from his aloofness from life. This is accomplished by the influence of a child; it is led up to by two separate series of events. One series begins with an injustice done Silas when a youth; the other series begins with the secret marriage of Godfrey Cass. The beginning of each series has no connection with the other; but, in spite of all, each approaches nearer and nearer until they unite and form a climax, or major knot.

The above is not an elaborate plot—it contains only two strands, or lines of causation, while it is possible and permissible for the author to approach his culmination through three or more separate strands. Witness Sydney Carton's death in "A Tale of Two Cities." This is the culmination of *several* strands of causation. The author may complicate matters still further by tying the various strands at points other than the culmination. Watch Shakespeare. In his "The Merchant of Venice," the culmination, climax, or major knot, takes place in the trial scene, wherein Shylock is outwitted by Portia. The strands are also tied together loosely in the play's very beginning when Antonio borrows from Shylock.

Also, an event in the main series may become the culmination of a minor series, thus forming a sub-plot. Referring to "The Merchant of Venice" again: The elopement of Jessica and Lorenzo—a sub-plot—culminates in a scene occurring mid-way between the beginning of the main strand (this begins with the signing of the bond) and the grand climax—the defeat of Shylock.

### *The Major Knot.*

No matter how complex your plot may be, it is bound to reach a point where one big event stands as the climax of all events. This is the major knot tying all strands together. In most plots, the photoplay aims to show the reader how this major knot came into being—how it was tied. This is not enough, however, to satisfy the public completely. They must know how events readjust themselves; how the major knot becomes untied. Therefore, the major knot, or the point of greatest complication, must *not* come at the *end* of your play. Instead, it should appear about three quarters of the way through your story. Consequently, the first three quarters of your play should show what leads up to the major knot, and the last quarter should disclose how events adjust themselves. Therefore, a plot consists of certain conditions leading up to a complication, which, in turn, is followed by an explication—a tying followed by an untying.



*The Three Elements of Plot.*

Aristotle said that each plot must have "a beginning, a middle, and an end." He did not mean that each plot may be cut into three equal parts. What he termed the "middle" is likely to appear very near the end of the average photoplay. It is not likely to be in the center. But everything that follows is, and was considered by Aristotle, the "end," and everything that precedes, the "beginning."

The elements of plot are three in number, then: the complication, or beginning; the climax, major knot, or "middle"; and the explanation, "end," or final untying of the major knot.

*The Complication, or Beginning.*—When photoplay writing was young, editors were content to feature material with a big climax or inspiring ending, and were satisfied to allow the author to lead up to this climax in a more or less slow, uninteresting manner. This is not possible to-day. Now the author is expected to "start something" at the very opening of his production. The interest of the spectator must be captured at the very outset; hence, the action of the play should not begin with a slow, casual introduction of the characters; should not picture a multitude of commonplace and ordinary incidents leading up to the climax. You must begin your play immediately with action. Certainly a stirring climax is worthy of an interesting introduction.

Begin your play in a natural manner. Do not make the condition of events at the opening seem artificial. Don't take things for granted. You must not grab your characters out of the air and say such-and-such conditions exist. Tell *why* and *how* those conditions came about.

Make your beginnings interesting. Many otherwise good productions are ruined because their opening is so tiresome and uninteresting that, by the time the spectator reaches a worth while portion of the plot, he is asleep, disgusted—and in no condition to judge fairly the merit of the balance of the play—or has left the theatre. The best way to make your beginning interesting is to eliminate all extraneous matter and promptly "get down to business."

The beginning of a play should be fresh, new, different. Avoid opening with a smiling bow or nod by each character. Instead, make the first scene tell something of the story; make all of your explanations in ACTION.

Start your play v-i-v-i-d-l-y—the word needs emphasis. Let everything be bright, intense, active, gripping—possessive of all the qualities of vigorous life. Make your opening of vital concern to the audience.

*The Climax, or Major Knot.*—While writing your play, carefully watch the climax itself, for it is the final climax to which we are constantly advancing. And it is the climax for which the audience should be breathlessly waiting. Situation follows situation, suspense constantly grows, events become more and more involved until solution seems impossible—misfortune seems *bound* to engulf our players. Then light appears. The "big scene" takes place; the climax is reached. Our curiosity is gratified.

But wait! The characters can't be left "in the air." True, the knot has been cut, but we are not satisfied. Does the hero marry the

girl? Are those estranged lovers united? Is the schemer punished? This must be made clear, or the audience will leave the theatre and say, "It was a good play, but had a peculiar ending." Here is where Aristotle's "end" fits in nicely.

*The Explication, or End.*—The third element of plot is the untying of the major knot. Usually the play ends in short order after the climax. The characters quickly adjust all their affairs and bid the audience a hasty "good-by." In one of O. Henry's stories, however, the value of the work rests in the explication. The story opens with a young married couple sitting in their home. Love is everywhere. The bride voices a wish, a fervent desire. It is early spring, but she wants a peach. So the husband starts out to find one. He sees a lot of oranges everywhere, but peaches are mighty scarce. In fact, they are nowhere to be found. Still he has hope. He knows of a certain gambling establishment, wherein the proprietor makes a hobby of serving to his patrons all the delicacies the world affords. So the hero organizes a raid on the place, breaks in, and quickly makes for the culinary department. With great joy he grasps one lone peach. His is the pride of an Alexander as he places the coveted fruit in the hands of his beloved wife. What's that the bride says? "I don't know but what I would just as soon have had an orange."

It is hardly necessary to say that the photoplaywright must interest his audience. He has another duty, however; he must *satisfy* them. This the explication does. It is a fine thing to write a gripping plot, making it intensely interesting up to the ending; but, in that last scene, you must untangle the knot you have tied, you must satisfy the audience, you must make them feel that everything has ended in a pleasant, gratifying manner. You don't want them to go away displeased.

It is not only important that you explain *what* happens to the character, but also that you show *why* things happen as they do. The average person knows there must be a reason for everything. He will give your play a fair chance. He will sit patiently through your plot even if it is rather dull, and, in the end, be satisfied if you will only show him before you are through that there is a reason for all that has gone before.

In writing the ending to your plot, try, without being grotesque, to break away from the commonplace. Conclude your plot in as unexpected a manner as possible.

But, if your story contains any kind of a mystery, do not allow the audience to guess the solution. Their interest depends on suspense and doubt; but a *natural ending* is necessary. Everything must be made clear and satisfying. Many otherwise excellent manuscripts have been rejected simply because they ended in an unsatisfactory manner. The plot may begin in a very pleasing way; the complications and situations may be truly interesting and entertaining; but, somehow, the story fails at the end. In other words, the explication is not satisfying. Take, for example, the produced Fox play, "Riders of the Purple Sage," featuring William Farnum. This was a fine story with an intensely gripping plot, masterfully acted by Mr. Farnum in his usually pleasing, whole-hearted manner. But the ending



failed to satisfy anyone. Perhaps the producer realized this, for he soon followed the first picture with a sequel, which adjusted the unsatisfactory ending of the previous picture.

You will realize how important the explication of a manuscript is when you know that the public demands a happy ending. No matter how artistic it may seem to end your work tragically, I advise you not to do it. The public wants real life as it actually is, except in this one particular. Even though the happy ending is somewhat inconsistent, it still is demanded; and, if you hope to sell your work, you had better confine yourself to the happy ending.

#### *Where To Begin A Photoplay.*

After you have gathered together all the material you intend to use in your plot, you then must decide where to begin. Here you enjoy the utmost liberty; you are guided only by your own desires and inclinations. You may start at the actual beginning of your plot; or you may follow the plan often used by Horace, of beginning in the middle and working backward toward the beginning. For, it is plain that, as long as the photoplaywright presents the events of his plot in logical sequence, it is not absolutely necessary to introduce them in chronological order. A photoplay may be told backward as well as forward. This is the device necessarily used in detective and mystery stories. Here, the writer begins with a major knot and works backward—unravelling as he goes—though his events still follow in logical sequence.

In some plays, the writer opens with the main character well advanced in years; then the action reverts to former years by way of explanation. In fact retrogression in time is often absolutely necessary. It is better, however, for the new writer to make the events of his plot follow each other not only in logical sequence but also in chronological succession.

#### *Tying and Untying.*

The complication and the major climax of a plot usually are far more interesting than the ending. That is, the causes leading up to an important event in a person's life, and the event itself, are more entertaining than the readjustment. This is the reason why the culmination of a photoplay should be placed well toward the end. Often, however, the knot in a play is cut at the very end—producing a great surprise often—but there really is no dried-and-cut reason why the climax *should* come far to the rear, because frequently the adjustment following the main complication is very entertaining. In fact, in many stories, the main complication arises at the beginning and the photoplay itself deals with an elaborate explication. Thus it is in detective stories. Here a knot is tied with Gordian intricacy at the very beginning; the play itself exploits the prowess of the detective in untying the knot.

#### *How To Find Plots.*

Some beginners have an idea that all the available plot material has been used. They are very wrong in this. Look at O. Henry. His stories will live forever. He will always touch a responsive



chord in the hearts and minds of fiction lovers everywhere. Why? Simply because he saw interesting stories everywhere, good ideas in everything. Suppose he had said to himself: "It's useless for me to try to write. The plots have all been used up. There is nothing new I can say. Shakespeare said all." Had he done this the world would have lost scores of the best short stories ever written. True, practically every subject has been written about; thousands of plays have been produced; but thousands more will come to life upon the screen after present-day writers have unraveled their life's plot and have passed out of the picture. Decades from now, authors will be turning out play after play in ever-increasing numbers; and, even though the basic themes of their work are, in a sense, old, they will be treated in a new way, so that they will seem new and fresh to the average playgoer. Life itself is world-old, yet we all live life differently, no two alike.

There are stories everywhere. The world is full of plots. Life is so burdened with plot material that the really earnest writer should be more concerned in finding out *what he shall use* than *where he shall find it*. No matter where or in what circumstances you live, there are innumerable plots all about you waiting to be utilized. All of your friends are living plots; your neighbors also; your family even. There is a story in every street, 'round every corner, in every city, in every country. **FIND THEME!** Don't dream of things or conditions about which you are unfamiliar. Instead, look around in your every-day life for material. You will find plenty of things to write about.

There is no limit to the places from which you can gather ideas; no limit except that prescribed by your own observation and your own knowledge of life. Study humanity; watch people; be observant. The lives of people will furnish you with ideas—and surely there are enough different types of people to supply *millions* of plots. No two people are just alike; they can't be; their circumstances and the things going to make up their lives are varied. So that most of their struggles, their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears, form a wonderful field for you to work on. Every passing minute has its story, every breath of life its plot. You can find them if you will.

Look at the world sympathetically. Study people, actions, motives. You will be surprised at the great wealth of material which will quickly unfold before you.

*Why You Should Have A Definite Objective Point.*

Unity in the photoplay is just as essential as it is in the novel; and the only way in which a writer may attain unity is to maintain a definite objective point, to keep constantly in mind the culmination of his series of events, and not utilize any incidents or situations not helping to bring the action to a climax. In other words, a writer must have the end of his story in mind before he begins. He must make the audience feel that he knows just where he is leading them. They must have a sense of progressing toward the desired end. Before an author actually starts to write his play, it must be entirely worked out in his own mind. He must know quite definitely just what is going to happen and what will not be included in the action of his

plot. He must not try to make up his story as he goes along—the favorite pastime of many beginners.

If a writer fails to keep the climax of his play in mind, he will not be able to decide, when writing his manuscript, whether this or that event does, or does not, belong in the series leading to the major knot. The result will probably be a jumble of events leading nowhere.

#### *How To Build A Plot.*

As previously stated, there can be no plot unless there are complications, or, as sometimes termed, situations. A situation is a temporary combination of conditions, or state of affairs—usually not pleasant, generally unfortunate for the time being. As a rule, the average plot consists of a number of situations of minor importance, all leading up to, and culminating in, the major climax. As soon as a writer is able to work out an interesting situation for his main characters, he has the beginning of a plot; then it is not such a difficult matter to complete the story.

As previously outlined, there are three elements of plot: complication, climax, ending. To build a plot in an easy way, begin with the climax, or major knot; think of an appealing predicament for your main character; then build your story backward to the beginning, and onward to the end.

Of course, people with synthetic minds naturally reason from cause to effect. Analytic minds, on the other hand, tend to reason from effect to cause. In evolving a plot, therefore, it is quite likely that the former intellect would construct forward through time; the latter, backward. If you place yourself at a certain beginning, it is easy to imagine forward along a certain series of events leading to a climax, then to an ending; or, beginning at the climax, it may be just as easy, or perhaps easier, to imagine backward to the various causes, or events, which brought about the major knot. In other words, most writers build their plots in either one of two ways: from cause to effect, from beginning to end; or from effect to cause, from climax to beginning. It seems apparent that Thackeray worked in the former manner. Guy de Maupassant evidently constructed in the latter way.

If you will take your climax, analyze it, pick out possible reasons why the characters are in their predicaments, then find the solution for their trouble—working out all of their difficulties, or untying the knot, as it were—you have your entire plot. In this way, you quickly construct a logical chain of events advancing to an interesting climax and ending in a satisfactory solution. You can readily see that, in developing your plot in this manner, you will unconsciously be logical; your work will be a perfect unit.

After you have worked your plot out in this manner, go back to the beginning. Rehearse everything completely from start to finish. In this way, you will be sure to eliminate contradictory elements, or illogical situations coming, either of which might have crept into your work.

This easy method of plot building has been outlined for the reason that it will greatly simplify your work. It is not necessary for you, however, to develop your plot in this manner. There are no hard and fast rules. Methods vary with individual temperaments. You



may discover a new method yourself. At any rate, it is safe to say that your own method, no matter what it is, will seem the most logical to you; for, after all, it is a question which each writer must work out for himself. Most successful writers have found, however, that they must know the general course of their play—and above all know the end—before they can begin.

You might make Euclid your model. He outlines his plot, then immediately starts to develop it, carefully weeding out all incidents that do not directly relate to the climax. He always keeps his eye on the end he has in view. And, the minute he reaches the culmination, he stops.

The beginner is advised, however, to develop his plot in the analytic manner—from effect to cause, from climax to beginning. He will be more apt to eliminate the extraneous, in reasoning from effect to cause, than in working from cause to effect. Furthermore, in building analytically, he is more apt to produce a perfect unit than if working in the synthetic manner.

Fully ninety-nine out of every hundred manuscripts are rejected because they lack a strong plot. Most writers fail because they really have nothing to write about. The great, crying need of the average script is plot, plot, plot. This statement cannot be over-emphasized.

In developing your plot, keep an elastic mind. Don't take certain fixed situations and try to adhere closely to them. See if it is not possible to alter your series of events and forge into new channels of thought. If you do this, you may be surprised at the great number of ideas which will readily present themselves.

After you have completed your plot, do not immediately start to write your synopsis. Don't hurry. Take plenty of time. Lay your work aside for a week or two. Forget about it. Write more plots. Then, after your first ideas have become rather vague in your mind, go back to them. Work them over. The chances are ten to one that you will find many flaws and inconsistencies in their development. These you can easily remedy yourself and greatly increase the value of your work.

### *"Eternal Three."*

The plots of stories often deal with only one character. Hawthorne's "Wakefield" concerns itself with the analysis of the character of a certain gentleman who decided not to go home one night. Instead, he lodged in another street; and, as a result, stayed away from home for twenty years. Other stories, like "Silas Marner," involve two main characters. Most photoplays, however, deal with *three* leading people. This three-cornered relationship has often been termed "eternal triangle," "dramatic triad," and so on. In this treatise it will be called the Eternal Three.

While it is possible to write photoplays concerning only two characters—or even one, for that matter—it is not a desirable thing for the beginner to attempt. This is true because, in dealing with one or two characters, it is a difficult matter to get action and strong complications. It is far easier to precipitate swift complication when there are three characters. Here the attitude of two characters toward the third immediately precipitates action. For example, see how easy it



is to inject complications into this three-cornered plot from Miss Wilkin's "New England Nun."

Louisa Ellis, an "old maid," is quietly sated in her little home one afternoon. Her betrothed lover, Joe Daggett, calls. They have been engaged for fifteen years, during which time Joe has been seeking his fortune in Australia. Both have been faithful; but, now that the wedding day is drawing near, both are apprehensive. Louisa Ellis dreads the marriage, but does not dare tell Joe. He has realized, too, that the love between them has vanished—in fact, he has fallen in love with a younger woman, Lily Dyer. But he is faithful to Louisa. Here is a real knot. Miss Wilkins unravels it easily in this manner. Louisa, while strolling down a road one moonlit night, unintentionally hears Joe and Lily talking. She hears them say they both think it wrong and unjust for Joe to break his engagement with Louisa. Having heard this, Louisa breaks the engagement herself. This completely unties the knot; the solution is simple and natural.

The elements of these three-cornered plots present a very fascinating problem to the photoplaywright. The characters may be two men and one woman, or two women and one man. Such a triangular relationship inevitably brings up consuming passion, fear, jealousy, surprise, anger, remorse even—all of which are right at the playwright's finger tips when he uses the "eternal three."

You may think at first glance that the eternal triangle does not exist in many stories. Perhaps the story may deal with only one character. If you will analyze the situations closely, however, you may find that the three-cornered plot is there even though we only have one character. That character may be struggling against opposition of some sort to gain wealth. Here the triangle is: character, opposition, wealth. He may be struggling against poverty for fame. Here it is: character, poverty, fame. But what is more common, he may have a sweetheart. The girl he loves and a third person in the form of a rival, or an objecting parent, completes the ordinary triangle. There are any number of three-cornered arrangements; in fact, it is rare indeed that a plot is built without the three-leaved relationship.

Therefore, the best thing for the new writer to do when beginning his plot is to locate a definite set of characters—a trio, preferably; then put them in a predicament. It is not necessary to rack your brain to find things for them to do. And do not try to dream of situations. Look around in your own life, in your own experience, and in the lives and experiences of your friends. You will find plenty of situations. You read stories, you read magazines, you read newspapers; therefore, it ought to be a simple matter for you to find any number of intense situations for your characters.

Not all things in real life, however, are suitable plot material. They may lack dramatic qualities, they may be trite and commonplace, or they may be so out of the ordinary that it would be impossible to make them convincing on the screen. Many writers imagine that, if something actually happens in life, it ought to make a fine plot. Not so. There have been instances where mothers have injured their children, but it would not be wise to write a photoplay on such a subject; because it would be practically impossible to convince the average

person that it was true to life, because of the fact that it is out of the ordinary. Therefore, you will have to use care in selecting plots from real life.

R. G. Moulton says: "It may be said boldly that *fiction is truer than fact*. Half the difference of opinion on the whole subject rests upon a mental confusion between two things, fact and truth—fact, the mass of particular and individual details; truth that is of general and universal import—fact, the raw material; truth, the finished article into which it is to be made up, with hundreds of chances of flaws in the working."

"Prefer an impossibility which seems probable, to a probability which seems impossible."

*Aristotle.*

### *How To Study and Analyze Other Photoplays.*

If you will study other plots you will be amply repaid. You will be surprised at the great good this will do you. Read other peoples' stories; see their plays. Watch how they build plots. Then invent situations and complications of your own. This will unconsciously teach you to cultivate a creative attitude and is bound to make you a better writer.

When watching a photoplay, mentally tear it apart. Turn the situations inside-out. By doing this you will learn to invent plots yourself.

Read newspapers carefully. Study magazines. You will be astonished at the great number of plots you will find in the events which daily transpire all over the world.

The average picture-goer fails to analyze the photoplays he sees. He goes to the theatre to be entertained. Of course, he carefully watches the play on the screen. But, when it is all over, the chances are that he doesn't know why he likes it, if he does. It pleases him, that's all. On the other hand, if he told you a certain picture appearing in your city wasn't good, he probably couldn't tell you exactly *why*. He might attempt to advance a reason, but probably couldn't give an adequate one.

Hereafter, when you go to the theatre, watch every play carefully. Note every action, every expression, every scene, every scenic effect. Examine the situations, dissect the play completely, see if you can find defects in it. Don't be unreasonable, but try to develop a critical attitude. Cultivate that attitude in every way possible.

Watch everything with a clear eye. By so doing, the play you see will cause a great many germ-plots to suggest themselves to you. These bare ideas can easily be enlarged upon and used as main situations in your own work. It is safe to say that the average successful writer has thought of many plots when viewing other productions.

Don't go to see any particular class of pictures. It is impossible for you to witness everything, but you can try to see a variety of material. This will greatly help to give you a variety of ideas.

Remember this. When you see a picture on the screen, you are viewing something which has been approved, probably written by a successful writer or a well-known director. Try to find, then, why the



play is successful; why the studio liked it; in what particulars it differed from your work. Keep an open mind. This may be hard to do, but it will repay you a thousand ways.

The successful photoplay writer must keep himself well-informed. He must know what the other fellow is doing and what is being produced. He must understand thoroughly the different requirements of all studios and know in a very comprehensive manner what type of material each of them is buying.

Besides closely watching what the "other fellow" puts into his picture, try to find incidents which he could have utilized in his work, yet failed to. Few writers make the best use of the material they have in hand. They often overlook a lot of good ideas, which you probably can use in some of your photoplays. Also note, in a general way, the amount of reading matter the author shows on the screen, the average length of his scenes, the number of close-ups he employs, and so on, remembering, above all, that, even though you may be able to find defects in his work, there was enough good in it to warrant its being produced.

#### *A Way To Make Plot Gathering Easy.*

Some writers overflow with ideas for plots. To them, plot-building seems a matter of instinct. They are born story-tellers. They find it the easiest matter in the world to think of any number of excellent ideas. As Bliss Perry nicely observes: "For these natural spinners of the yarn, to whom invention is the most easy, the most fascinating, the most captivating of gifts—for a Stevenson, a Scott, a Dumas—to block out the plot of a story is a mere bagatelle." With the average person, however, it is a far different matter. He has to do a lot of hard thinking to work out something satisfactory.

You can greatly simplify your plot troubles, and make the problem of finding suitable plots an easy one, if you will acquire the note-book habit. Never be without a note-book. Whenever you think of a new idea—any kind of a suggestion which you may be able to use in any way—write it down. Don't let it fly by just because you have no immediate use for it. Jot it down anyway; then, at some later date when you are in need of material, you will run across it and be deeply grateful that you *did* write it down. And remember that no writer in the world glances around and finds a plot already worked out for him. They all begin with simple ideas and carefully work them out into finished productions. So don't wait for ideas to come to you. They won't step up, tap you on the shoulder, and say, "I'm a plot." You have to find *them* hiding around the corner, and bring them out into the light.

Maybe you are the type of writer who thinks of ideas easiest when your mind is busy—when you are working on one of your other productions. Anyway you will find that ideas come more readily at certain times. Many writers have found that they can think of ten times as many good ideas after they lie down for the night. If this is the case with you, keep your note-book handy.

Do not think for one minute that this note-book suggestion is mere theory or sheer waste of time. If beginners sometimes imagine this,



it is because they do not understand the importance of system in writing. System is just as essential to your success as it is to any business or professional man. So don't scorn the note-book habit and be the loser.

*How To Gather Ideas From Other People's Plots  
Without Imitating.*

Few writers, indeed, intentionally apprehend any part of another person's writing and use it as their own. And it is not the purpose of this chapter to give anyone the idea that they should utilize other people's ideas in this manner. The author of this book despises such methods. Therefore, the first thing to be said is, do not rehash other people's ideas and pass them out as your own. Don't take other people's plots and slightly rearrange them for your own use. You won't get far if you do. The photoplaywright, if he is to be anything, must be his own thinker.

But, though you must not take other people's ideas, it nevertheless is true that the plots of other writers will cause ideas of your own to suggest themselves, and you would be very foolish if you failed to make use of these new ideas simply because you thought they might have some connection with the other story. By studying other people's work, your own imagination is stimulated; and you would be foolish, indeed, if you failed to use the ideas brought to your mind in this manner. Of course, when you take ideas from the newspapers, there is no possibility of purloining another's brains. The accounts in the papers are just as much yours as anybody's. Although they are written by certain correspondents, still they are merely an account of events. They are public property, often of great dramatic value. (This does not apply to articles, stories, small filler, and the like, in newspapers.) But you should not take a plot *bodily* from the papers. Not that it belongs to anyone in particular, but, if it is good, the chances are that ten thousand would-be writers have done the same thing—maybe sooner than you. Therefore, use newspaper incidents merely as a basis for a plot, and work out the chain of situations in your own way. Then your finished manuscript will be different. In other words, use the newspapers as a stimulant for your own imagination.

Don't confine yourself to the reading of newspapers and fiction. A comprehensive knowledge of fiction and all current events is of great importance, but you should also be familiar with the better books of philosophy, history, science and education. In fact, in order to make yourself a well-balanced, broad-minded writer, you must gain a general knowledge of all writing.

And from this extensive reading, you will constantly gather facts and situations, complications and predicaments, all of which you will, at one time or another, be able to develop into cashable ideas.

Almost everything you see or read is of value. It ought to serve either one of two purposes: suggest a new plot to you, or suggest a better way to complete some idea only partially worked out.

Use great care in utilizing plots gathered from other people's work, not only for your own safety, but because of the fact that, if you try to adopt another's ideas *bodily*, the chances are that many unscrupu-

lous writers will "beat you to it." In other words, use only the bare ideas you gather from other people's writing. In this way you can reshape them and surround them with new incidents in such a manner that no one would recognize them as having sprung from any particular source. Such plots truly will be all your own. This is not only the safest way, but the only sensible way to write; for, if you adopt other people's ideas bodily, you never will sell a manuscript. Your work will be so like other writers' productions, already filmed, that no editor will buy from you.

A great many beginners read of some sensational trial in the courts and immediately conclude that it will make a wonderful story. They copy the entire trial, incident for incident, sometimes even to actual names. The result is a hopelessly unsalable play. These writers make the mistake of *copying* a story from the newspaper, instead of getting a *basic idea* from the real event and working it out in their *own way*. Newspapers and other people's stories will not aid the writer who lacks inventive ability. They serve merely as sign-posts to show the wise writer *where* he can find inspiration. It is not *what you read* in the papers that counts, but in what manner the reading excites your imagination.

How often the writer is approached by a friend who says, "I've a great idea for you." Usually, the only consideration which should be granted this "great idea" is respect for the aged. Do not make the mistake of writing about the plots your friends give you. Think for yourself. Don't refuse friendly suggestion; listen to what people have to say. You *may*, once in a lifetime, get a fine suggestion in this manner. As a rule, however, the ideas given away are not worth accepting; people with worth while ideas aren't peddling them.

The copyright law provides a penalty of \$100 for every exhibition of a photoplay based on a copyrighted story or play, provided the owner of the copyright has not granted permission to use his work. So it becomes pretty expensive to use another's ideas.

But suppose you *did* take another person's plot and make a play out of it, and even succeeded in selling it. Suppose again, that it was produced at a cost of several thousand dollars. After going to this great expense, the producer puts the play on the market; and, after it has appeared several times, the original writer learns you have stolen his work. Can you imagine what would happen? Can't you see how many thousands of dollars it would cost the producer to settle the case? Not only that; but you probably would never be able to sell another manuscript to any other company. They would keep you well in mind. You would be *persona non grata* at every studio.

Therefore, in gathering ideas from other people's plots, be very careful to use incidents here and there, and let them serve as a stimulant for your own imagination, so that you are really and truly able to work out a finished manuscript all your own.

In short don't worry about *where* you get your ideas *just so you get them honestly*.

#### *Why You Should Keep Well-Informed.*

Writers have been known to spend many days and nights completing some pet idea. They fully expected it would startle the world. Per-

haps it *was* very clever; but, after they had it finished, they found to their sorrow that it had been used before in some similar manner. Naturally, it was hard to convince them of this at first, but the truth gradually dawned. What a disappointment!

This can be avoided by keeping well-informed. You cannot know too much about what is going on in the world about you. An experienced critic, or an editor, easily recognizes new ideas because he is perfectly familiar with all screened material. Furthermore, he is well-read with respect to current books, magazines, newspapers, and the like. You should be, too. It is the greatest antidote in the world for the unconscious use of other peoples' ideas.

It would be a good thing if every photoplay writer would carefully read all of the motion picture magazines and the motion picture trade journals, constantly keeping himself familiar with the activities of all the leading actors and actresses. Know, above all, what types of pictures the different companies are releasing. You can obtain this information from any of the motion picture magazines and trade journals for sale at all first-class newsstands.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE SYNOPSIS

The photoplay synopsis tells the story of your plot in detailed narrative form, without the use of dialogue or useless description; consequently, it is a general view of your story, an abstract or summary of the action. We will here discuss the synopsis first because it has the initial position in the photoplay script and because of its importance.

#### *Value of the Synopsis.*

Not including plot, the synopsis is the most important part of a photoplay. The truth of this statement becomes evident when you remember that, in submitting a photoplay for sale, you send to the editor only a detailed synopsis of your plot and a cast of characters. The continuity, or scenario, is not submitted unless the company to whom you are sending your work specifically gives notice of the fact that they want it included. Fully ninety per cent. of all producing companies have publicly announced that they do *not* want to consider anything but the synopsis. Therefore, when submitting your work for sale, send only the first and second parts of the complete photoplay script. This is all an editor cares to see. If your work is accepted, the continuity will be written in the studio by the producing company's own staff of writers. Rarely, indeed, is work handled in any other manner.

Since your work is either accepted or refused practically on the merit of synopsis alone, the latter's importance is readily apparent.

Some writers will conclude from the above that an extensive knowledge of continuity writing is not necessary. And they are right. The "free lance" writer can sell scripts as fast as he can write them without being an expert in the writing of continuity. But—and this is important—you must have a *general* knowledge of continuity writing; otherwise, you will be apt to develop many of your plots in such a manner that they will not be salable.

#### *How To Write the Synopsis.*

Writing a good synopsis, while of paramount importance, is not a difficult matter. You merely present, in regular prose, a crisp, clear, complete outline of your plot—an outline of all the action of your play. Omit all conversation and useless word-pictures. Tell your plot in just as few words as possible. Tell *everything*, but do not waste words or time telling it. Leave out all jokes or witty sayings. Don't try to be funny, brilliant or clever. Be businesslike, for all the editor wants is a comprehensive knowledge of your plot. Remember, too, that editors are busy men. Be brief. To know how to condense judiciously, to extract all the juice, without any of the rind or pulp, is as important to the photoplaywright as a knowledge of anatomy to the painter.

But, in cultivating brevity, do not omit parts of your story. Don't say, "While in France, Frank goes through many exciting experi-

ences." You must tell more than that; you must relate briefly the action involved in those "exciting experiences." You are not writing a synopsis when you say, "Frank triumphs over his enemy in a clever manner." Tell how and in what manner he triumphed. In other words, you must describe all the action in your plot—all of the main events—but you must do it in a brief way. So be careful to strike out all repetition and superfluous adjectives and knit long sentences into brief ones.

A fine literary style is not required to write a synopsis. Simple, common, every-day words are all you need. Many photoplay editors are ordinary people and might not appreciate a fine style anyway. Even more, well-turned phrases are not required. This does not mean that incorrect sentences or mis-spelled words will be tolerated. Not for a minute. Crude manuscripts receive slight consideration, for most editors take it for granted that they are the work of an illiterate, incapable of producing worth while ideas. Many excellent photoplays have never found the light, simply because the synopsis was carelessly written.

Write your entire synopsis in the *present tense*. Don't say, "Helen *made* her debut at the Society Ball, and instantly *became* the center of attraction." Make it present tense. Say, "Helen **MAKES** her debut at the Society Ball, and instantly **BECOMES** the center of attraction." Keep to the present tense all the way through. This is one of the most important things to remember.

There is a certain form in which the synopsis should be written. The following is a good example. This is a synopsis for "The Countess Charming," the Model Photoplay printed in Part III.

### THE COUNTESS CHARMING SYNOPSIS

Saunders Julian, a wealthy young business man, meets Betty Lovering—beautiful, honest and unspoiled daughter of a social-climbing mother—at a Red Cross gathering in the local Country Club.

The dictator of society, who leads the smart set, is Mrs. Esmond Vandergrift. In a discussion concerning Red Cross contributions, Saunders Julian unintentionally offends Mr. Vandergrift by defending the integrity of the Red Cross, denounced as "grafters" by Vandergrift, a self-centered "know-it-all." Therefore, Mr. and Mrs. Vandergrift decide to oust the unlucky young man from society.

Julian has promised Betty Lovering, with whom he is rapidly falling in love, that he will obtain a large donation for the Red Cross; but, since his cold reception by the Vandergrifts and by Betty's mother, he realizes that the possibilities of doing this are extremely limited.

Owing to his being barred from society, Julian swears "revenge" on the would-be social mentors, and decides to pose as a Russian Countess, making use of his ability to impersonate women, and a large wardrobe of women's clothes which he has used in amateur theatricals. As the "countess" he rents a large estate near the Vandergrifts, not far from the Country Club, and is amused to find himself not only re-admitted to society, but one of the most popular personages of the place. Even Mrs. Vandergrift herself is deceived, and invites the "countess" to many of her most exclusive social functions.

Once fairly established, Julian proceeds to make good his promise to Betty to collect for the Red Cross and is astonished herself—no, himself—at the results. He "steals" one man's wallet, another's valuable scarfpin, and, from Mrs. Vandergrift herself, he takes a priceless neck-



lace of pearls. Also, as the "countess," he meets Betty who does not recognize her lover, and proceeds to sing the praises of Saunders Julian so highly that Betty becomes jealous.

The various thefts are soon discovered and a detective sent for to find out who is doing the thieving. Suspicion points directly to the "Countess," and the evidence is strong enough to warrant her arrest. The arrest is planned for the Country Club dance; but, just as the officers are about to seize the unknown countess, he turns out the lights, knocks down the officers, and makes good his escape.

Through Julian's friend and sponsor, Dr. Cavendish, it is announced that the "Countess" is severely hurt and on the verge of death. As the detectives wait outside, the "Countess" DIES and Saunders Julian appears. Betty, remorseful for her jealousy of the "Countess," seeks to place some flowers on her coffin; but, before she can be prevented, the double personality is exposed and the two are happy.

#### *How Long to Make the Synopsis.*

The beginner usually is at a loss to know just how many words are used in a synopsis. The average writer, wishing to do full justice to his plot, proceeds to tell it very voluminously; and, since the acceptance or refusal of the script depends so largely on the synopsis, the writer really should not be restricted to any particular length. To be explained clearly, some plots require many more words than others.

In your zeal to be as brief as possible, do not be too concise. An incomplete synopsis is, in most particulars, even more objectionable than one too long, for the latter at least leaves no phase of the plot to be guessed at.

Though the synopsis must fully record the plot concisely and persuasively, there is no fixed limit to the number of words to be employed. The average five- or six-reel play is generally outlined in from four hundred to eight hundred words.

Make your synopsis just as short as you can and still tell your story in a clear, comprehensive, entertaining manner. Do not omit anything having a direct bearing on your story, but tell it all in as few words as possible. Do this: Imagine you are telling your synopsis to the photoplay editor himself. Write it, then, just as you would tell it to him—remembering constantly that *he is a busy man*.

In your effort to make your synopsis brief, do not write a wild scramble of words having little or no reference to your story. And, if you are in doubt whether you should use four hundred or eight hundred words, use the greater number. Be on the safe side. Clarity is more important than brevity.

Take plenty of time. It is better to re-write your synopsis a dozen times than to send it out unsatisfactory in any little detail.

While synopsis writing is not difficult, it nevertheless is vitally important, and the beginner cannot be too watchful. Synopses should be models of clearness and brevity.

You need three things to sell a script easily: a good plot, a well-written synopsis, a satisfactory title. Plot, synopsis, title—the "eternal three" of successful photoplay writing. Their importance cannot be overestimated.

Spend most of your time on your plots!

Do not be satisfied with anything but a perfect title!

And *do not neglect the synopsis!* It neatly "brings home the bacon" if your plot is salable. That's sufficient recommendation.



## CHAPTER V

### THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

#### *How To Write The Cast.*

When writing the synopsis, first note down the names of all your principal characters before you begin to outline the plot. Then, as you complete your synopsis, record each additional character's name as soon as he or she appears.

All of your important characters should be described briefly in your cast, so that the editor will know at a glance what type of characters they are.

The cast is necessary and important because it gives the editor a clear idea of how many people are needed to produce your script. At a glance he knows whether his company is capable of producing your work.

It is best to make the cast as explanatory as possible. This will be a great help to the editor. You should give the approximate age of the characters, general appearance, occupation, characteristics, and the type of part he or she is to play. Of course, there are no special restrictions to be placed upon the description of your characters. A brief description of from three to twelve words is generally sufficient. If you bring out the characteristics of your people clearly in the synopsis, the probabilities are that you will not have to describe them so fully in the cast.

Deal with your most important character first. Eliminate all unnecessary words in the cast. Some writers give the scenes in which their characters appear. This is not necessary.

The following cast of characters for the Model Play, "The Countess Charming," will give you a correct idea of just how to write the cast.

#### CAST OF CHARACTERS

Saunders Julian	} a wealthy young business man.....	Julian Eltinge
Countess Raffelski		
Betty Lovering, youthful, honest and unspoiled.....		Florence Vidor
Mrs. Lovering, Betty's social-climbing mother.....		Edythe Chapman
Dr. John Cavendish, Julian's friend and sponsor.....		Tully Marshall
Esmond Vandergrift, President of the Biscuit Trust, the		
Board of Trade, and a Bank or two....		Gustave von Seyfertitz
Mrs. Vandergrift, leader of the "Smart Set".....		Mabel VanBuren
Detective Boyle .....		Billy Elmer
Soto, Julian's valet .....		George Kuwa
The Maid .....		Mrs. George Kuwa

#### *How Many Characters to Use.*

The beginner is apt to use too many characters. The common tendency is to introduce a great number of different people, employ them for a little while, then let them disappear, without explaining why

they left or where they went. This is contrary to the correct method.

A photoplay should be developed with the use of just as few characters as are absolutely necessary for the actual needs of the plot. Do not introduce various people for ornament. Characters in "non-essential" occupations are not wanted. Every extra character in your production requires the outlay of no small amount of additional money. And since, in producing a new writer's work, any company is "taking a chance," so to speak, you had better make their risk as small as possible.

If you will go over the rough draft of your synopsis before it is written in final form, you may find that, without injuring your plot in any way, one of your characters can easily do the work you may have assigned to two or more. Your duty is plain; use the fewer number, even though it requires a little extra work on your part.

Large casts are not only expensive, but tend to retard the action of your plot. It takes much time and many feet of film to introduce elaborate casts. Furthermore, the more characters there are in a story, the more difficult it becomes for the audience to understand the plot and the relationship of the different characters. It is difficult for them to tell "who's who."

But, in trying to economize, do not go to the other extreme of not using *enough* characters. It is possible to write a photoplay around one character, but this is not work for the beginner. If in doubt whether to use six or eight characters, however, limit your cast to the smaller number.

When you use "extras," such as soldiers, cowboys, people on the street, and the like, do not specify the exact number to be used. Leave that to the producer's discretion.

The main thing to remember in planning a cast is to use just as few characters as possible.

#### *Characters and Character Study.*

The photoplaywright should carefully study character. The real task of creating flesh-and-blood characters depends, in a large measure, on the actors who take part in the production of your script and the studio producing it. But the highest salaried actors, the finest directors and the most expensive accessories cannot make your characters interesting if *you* have failed to make them so.

Therefore, you should create *real* people. This must be done largely by action, for you are not allowed to use detailed word description as in story writing. Every little thing your characters do, then, must mean something with respect to their natures and motives. And there must be no doubt in the mind of the audience as to just what types your different characters are.

This does not mean that every act of your hero must be heroic. It simply means that, if you have established the impression that a certain character is a particular type, you must not let him do things which will contradict the former impression, and thus confuse the audience.

Study all sorts and conditions of people. Carefully note the traits and habits of everyone with whom you come in contact. See how they react to different events. Study their moods, peculiarities, weaknesses,



strong points. Find out, if you can, just what part of their character is a result of environment and association. This will greatly help you create real people in your plays.

The first impression a character creates in the mind of the audience is often a lingering and important one. Hence, you should be extremely careful to make first impressions significant. Just as soon as a character is introduced, show him carrying out some action correctly exhibiting his nature. If your heroine, Dorothy, is a worthy, ambitious, determined young musician, it won't do to show her in the opening scene comfortably reclining in negligee and eating chocolates. That might be a pretty way to start your picture, but it would give the audience a wrong impression of Dorothy. Better show her practicing at the piano.

The clothes of your characters go far toward portraying their real character and station in life. A policeman, maid, messenger or clergyman are identified by their dress. Likewise, if a character wears "sporty" clothes, we do not need to be told of his elastic morals. In fact, clothes often clearly indicate character.

Environment also helps to identify characters. If Mr. Jones is first shown in a costly-equipped office, graciously concluding an interview with a well-dressed client, we need hardly be told that he is a prosperous business man or professional.

If Mr. Jones scolds his stenographer for a slight mistake, we know he is unreasonable and mean tempered. Every little movement means something. Study people's actions. Learn to delineate character unmistakably by the big and little things your characters do.

#### *Naming Characters.*

Shakespeare said that a rose by another name would be just as sweet. In fact, he thought there wasn't much in a name. This is one instance where the great writer was wrong. Experience has proved that there have been at least a great many dollars in the names of some photoplays.

There is a great amount of psychology in names. It will be worth your time to study them. Many writers are able to make you like or dislike their characters, in a measure, just as soon as you hear their names. Dickens and Hawthorne were experts in making the name describe the character. Isn't it easy to tell that "Mr. Gathergold" is a money grabber?

Some inexperienced writers seem to enjoy calling their hero Apollo, or Reginald, while their heroine blossoms out handicapped with Magnolia or Evalina. Such names are the identification marks of inexperience. Do not use them. Can you imagine any reasonable person wanting to follow the antics of an Apollo?

Different names suggest different stations in life. The tendency among many would-be writers, who want to make the character seem aristocratic, is to call them Van der This or Van Something Else. The reason for this is not clear. Surely there is nothing in the "Van" to elevate the character. Richard Harding Davis once wrote a story about a fair sort of chap whom he called Van Bibber. Can it be imitation that has brought about this Van-pest? By all means do not



handicap your characters with such detestable names. If you knew how irritating it is to an editor, you would not do it. So, if you have to choose between calling your character Vanderbilt or Smith, make it Smith! Just for the editor's sake!

There is great power and beauty in a well-chosen name. You should not use names appearing in popular plays or publications, however, even though they are very attractive; for readers often ascribe certain characteristics to certain names and are liable to be prejudiced against your characters. Remember that a bad name suggests a bad character; and, if you try to make the public believe otherwise, you will have a difficult time.

Do not go to the extreme of making your names describe certain characteristics of your people. Don't name the kind old gentleman Mr. Goodman. Don't label the sly villain Mr. Fox. True, a great many plays have been produced with absurd names for their characters. The fact that the work was produced, however, was not due to the absurd names, but to the strong plot; and, if the characters had been better treated with respect to their names, the play would have been more pleasing. Use every-day names, though not the extremely common. Ordinary names suggest real living characters, and sincerity is what you aim for.

Women are more responsive to names than men, so the names of your characters will have much to do with the effect of your play on the feminine public.

One thing is certain regarding names; there is a fashion in them. People born a number of years ago were frequently called Martha, Hannah, Mary Ann or Jane. Then the style changed, and we found such names as Bessy, Hattie, and Nellie becoming popular. They were in turn speedily replaced with such romantic names as Gwendolyn, Gladys, Guinevere. The tendency recently has been to revert to really old-fashioned names, or a combination of the new and the old, such as Elizabeth, Margaret or Betty Jane. Follow the style, if you can keep pace.

It will be wise for you to study all types of names carefully. Be sure to take great pains to christen the "child of your brain" with a careful regard for the feelings of the editor who is to become its foster-father. Unless you are an unusually clever writer, you will have enough trouble writing and selling your work without handicapping it with impossible names for your characters.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SCENE-PLOT

As indicated in a former chapter, the scene-plot is the third division of the complete photoplay manuscript as produced in the studio. The scene-plot consists of a list of all the different scenes, both interior and exterior, used in the photoplay, together with an indication of the number of scenes photographed in each set.

Inasmuch as the scene-plot is almost always written in the studio, after the script has been purchased, the new writer is not particularly interested in it. The subject is therefore discussed briefly in this chapter, in the hope that the reader may some day secure a position as staff writer or director, and then find the following information of great value.

The division of this chapter entitled, "Limiting Sets," is important to *you*, however. Read it carefully.

#### *The Purpose and Use of the Scene-Plot.*

The scene-plot quickly shows the director just what different "locations" are necessary to produce a manuscript. This is important for him to know, for the production of many pictures requires unusual scenic effects, often necessitating special trips to foreign localities. To film some plays it is necessary to take an entire company of players and cameramen from one city to another, from one state to another, and even from one country to another. In producing "A Daughter of the Gods," featuring Annette Kellerman, the Fox Film Corporation sent Herbert Brenon to Jamaica with several score of actors, actresses and helpers. Here they spent thousands of dollars—Fox claimed a million—in salaries and various expenses to produce the desired results. They even went so far as to build their own refrigerating plant in order to keep their film constantly at a fixed cool temperature. The scene-plot of "A Daughter of the Gods" must have indicated much of this expense to the director, although Mr. Brenon was allowed much of a "free hand."

The expression scene-plot is borrowed from the theatre. The scene-plot in regular theatrical work consists of a list of the different scenes, and shows where the different drops, foliage, cut drops, and the like, are located, and how and where the various pieces of scenery are to be placed on the stage. The theatrical scene-plot is used by the stage carpenter, who arranges the different stage settings.

In photoplay productions the scene-plot serves a similar purpose. Even though considerable artificial scenery is not used in photoplays, the scene-plot is none the less valuable. Instead of being handled by a stage carpenter, however, it is used by the director, who supervises the making of each photoplay. He tells each character exactly what he must do. He is the man, then, who interprets your manuscript from beginning to end. He must know what articles of furniture appear in each scene, what setting is to be used, if it is an exterior or interior, and so on. This information the scene-plot gives him.

Accordingly, the scene plot consists of a numerical list of the different settings required to produce the play in question, and each different setting is followed by the numbers of the different scenes in which that setting is used. The various settings are divided into two classes, depending on whether they are produced indoors or taken in the open. Those produced inside of the studio are grouped under the heading "Interiors"; those produced in the open are listed as "Exteriors."

Being a list of the different settings and properties, the scene-plot obviously must be written *in the studio* after the photoplay continuity has been written. Consequently, the new writer need not concern himself greatly about scene-plot writing.

#### *A Model Scene-Plot.*

In order to give you an absolutely correct idea of just how a scene-plot is prepared, we print below one prepared for "The Countess Charming," the Model Play reproduced in Part III of this book.

### SCENE - PLOT

#### *Interiors*

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Club Lounge                       | 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-20-78-81-82-88-89-90-91-92-93                   |
| 2. Corner of Club                    | 22  |
| 3. Corner of Lovering Hall           | 25-27-180-182-154   |
| 4. Corner of Mrs. Van's Morning Room | 26-37-247-249   |
| 5. Julian's Library                  | 28-30-31-33-34-38   |
| 6. Betty's Boudoir                   | 29-235  |
| 7. Beside Crack in Door              | 32  |
| 8. Julian's Bedroom                  | 35-36-39-40   |
| 9. Countess' Drawing Room            | 47-48-179-181-183-188-190-191-233-234-253-255-256-257-258-259-260-261-262                       |
| 10. Ladies' Cloak Room               | 83-84-85-86   |
| 11. Countess' Boudoir                | 100-102-103-187-189-194-196-197-198-199-200-201-202-236-239-240-242-243-244-245-246-248-250-251 |
| 12. Bath House                       | 138-169-171-173   |
| 13. Mrs. Van's Boudoir               | 142-148-155-156-158   |
| 14. Countess' Hallway                | 195-238-241-252   |
| 15. Club Dancing Room                | 209-210-211-224-229-231   |
| 16. Conservatory                     | 212-213-214-216-217-219-226   |
| 17. Entrance to Conservatory         | 215-222   |
| 18. Beside Conservatory Garden Door  | 218-220-221-223   |

#### *Exteriors*

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Exterior Club (terrace or piazza) | 18½-21                                       |
| 2. Terrace at Betty's House          | 41-42-43                                     |
| 3. Vandergrift Garden                | 44-45-46                                     |
| 4. Club Lawn                         | 49-50-52-204-205-206-208                     |
| 5. Club Porch                        | 51-87-207                                    |
| 6. Club Drive                        | 53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-225                  |
| 7. First Golf Tee                    | 61-63-64-65-67-68-69-70-71-72-73-74-75-76-77 |
| 8. Golf Links                        | 62   |
| 9. Countess' Back Yard               | 66   |
| 10. Police Station                   | 79-80  |
| 11. Betty's Home                     | 94-95-96-97-98                               |
| 12. Lovering Doorstep                | 99   |
| 13. Vandergrift Home                 | 101  |



14. Lawn at Billowcrest	104-105-110-112-163-166
15. Billowcrest Porch	106-107-108-109-174-175-176-177-178
16. Bath Houses	111-114-159
17. Beach	113-117-118-119-120-121-122-124-125-127- 128-129-130-131-132-133-134-135-137-140- 153
18. Porch at Billowcrest	115
19. Shrubbery	116-123-126-144-145-147
20. Waterside	136
21. Side of Bathhouse	139-165-168-170-172
22. Tool House	141-143-162-164
23. Near Fruit Tree	149-150-151-157
24. Garden	160
25. Exterior House	146-152-154-161
26. Bathhouse	167
27. Countess' Gate	184-186
28. Countess' House	185
29. Julian's Home	192-193
30. Lovering Home	203
31. Front of Club	227-228-230-232
32. Corner of Terrace	237

### *Limiting Sets.*

One word of caution slightly relative to the scene-plot will not be amiss. It is the tendency of many beginners to use a multitude of different scenes in their plays. This may be due to the fact that the average beginner often wants his characters to travel over extended areas. Whatever the cause, never make the mistake of requiring the use of a great number of different settings in any of your manuscripts. Such plays are immediately rejected. Producers do not want film plays requiring so many different scenes.

Many excellent five- and six-reel manuscripts have been produced with only eighteen or twenty interior settings. Of course, it is much easier to use a great many scenes in a manuscript, because it thus is possible to develop the plot with much less work. But you will find that, if you use too many different settings in your play, it will be difficult to sell. You need not be so sparing in your use of exterior settings, however, as it does not cost a great deal to utilize nature.

Avoid the use of a great deal of costly paraphernalia in the working out of your script. Do not let your hero buy a yacht and burn it up, or wreck a couple of automobiles before breakfast. This may sometimes prove animating to a certain class of people, but it is a little too exciting for the producer who has to supply the material.

In short, when developing your plot, try to confine the action of your characters to a limited area, so as not to be extravagant in scenes and settings.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE CONTINUITY OR SCENARIO

The continuity, or scenario, is the fourth division of the complete photoplay script—as used by the director in the studio. In the continuity, the plot is outlined in *action*, just as it appears on the screen; all reading matter is also given. The Model Play in Part III of this book is the continuity for “The Countess Charming”; it is the working scenario, exactly as used by the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation to produce the above-named Paramount Picture. Before proceeding with this chapter, carefully examine “The Countess Charming.”

In the early days of the motion picture, writers labored arduously over their play, developing its plot both as a synopsis and as a detailed scenario—just as it was to appear on the screen. In other words, before one could submit a script for sale he was compelled to write a synopsis, a cast of characters, a scene-plot, and continuity. This quickly proved unsatisfactory. Editors soon discovered that a writer might be exceedingly clever at plot-building, but hopeless as a continuity writer; while, on the other hand, some of the best known continuity writers are poor plot builders. So photoplay writing has become a double art; one class of writers build plots and write them in synopsis form; another class take the plots and adapt them to the screen in continuity form. The two types of writing are entirely different—the one creative, the other technical. Working in harmony, they produce the ultimate in photoplays.

The beginner need not puzzle over continuity writing; it is done in the studio by staff writers especially trained in, and fitted for, the work. So the writing of photoplays has become a simple matter. All you need do is submit a synopsis of your plot and a cast of characters.

It is desirable for the beginner to have a knowledge of continuity writing, however, as it may help him understand the limitations of the photoplay.

#### *The First Step In Continuity Writing—Visualization.*

One of the most important phases of continuity writing is the power of visualization—the act of forming a mental picture of the things to be presented on the screen. You must be able to picture your story in your own mind as it will appear on the screen; you must be able to *see* every action you put into your work. Action is the all-important requisite of the photoplay. It is what your characters *do* that determines the value of your work; and, in order to make your characters act properly, you must first be able to see in your own mind just what they are going to do. Unless the continuity writer has a clear idea of the action himself, he cannot make the director understand.

Let us presume that you have built a plot possessing all the requirements of a salable idea. You begin to write the continuity. But are

you able to visualize your play? Can you close your eyes and see just how it will appear on the screen. If not, you will surely fall flat in the writing soon after you begin. And the chances are that you will continue to the finish along the line of least resistance—the result being absolutely impossible to produce, no matter how good the basic idea.

So the successful continuity writer is the one with the picture eye. You must visualize each scene so you will know just how it will appear on the screen. You must see the play *in action* before you can begin to write the continuity.

Cultivate visualization. Find a quiet spot where you will not be disturbed by anyone or anything. Close your eyes and concentrate on your play. See it in your own mind. Don't dream. Visualize! You will be surprised how easily you will promptly develop the faculty to such an extent that you can visualize anywhere—even on the street—no matter how intense the activity around you.

#### *How and When to Introduce Characters.*

Producers used to print the entire cast on the screen before the play started; that is, immediately after the title of the script had been flashed before the audience. This method was unsatisfactory because it was an exceedingly difficult matter for the audience to get the different characters clearly identified in their own mind before they saw any of the action of the play, especially in the brief space of time allotted to the exhibition of the cast. The proper time to show a character's name and identify him on the screen is when he first appears in the action of the play.

In introducing your characters, it is advisable to use a few brief words of description to help the audience gain an insight into their dispositions and character. For example, Betty, in "The Countess Charming," is described as "youthfully honest and unspoiled enough to be touched." The character of her mother is well brought out in the brief description, one "to whom the Social Drift of the Moment is Law."

Keep your chief characters on the screen long enough when first presented to let everyone become well acquainted with them.

Every character in your play should be introduced just as quickly as possible, and should instantly be identified in the mind of the audience. Nothing is more irritating than to see a character whose relation to other characters is not clear. The usual method of introducing and identifying characters is to insert a sub-title. Turn to sub-title five of "The Countess Charming." Here the members of the North Shore Country Club are quickly identified. Notice how promptly the author identifies the heroine, Betty, in the very first scene, sub-title seven. Her mother is promptly identified in scene two. The hero is presented in scene three. Not a moment's time is lost. The other characters follow at the proper time in quick order; there is no confusion or misunderstanding as to who they are.

#### *How to Turn a Plot Into Action.*

Many writers make the mistake of wasting too much time on preliminaries. They use up many scenes without getting down to busi-



ness. They bore the audience with a number of incidents having little or no connection with their plot, whereas they should strike to the very heart of the subject at once.

Notice in "The Countess Charming" how little time is lost in beginning the action. The theme of the story is summed up in sub-title four; the preliminary situation at the opening of the play is briefly outlined in sub-title five. The natures of the leading characters in the play are quickly brought out. Before seven brief scenes have passed, the author has established the fact that Betty and Saunders are in love. By the time fourteen short scenes have flickered by, the author has already established opposition between Saunders and the Vandergrifts. The play is well under way. The next task is to acquaint the audience with the aims of the main characters, and promptly introduce the opposition. This is done without delay.

So the plot should begin in the first scene, if possible. Don't timidly wade into the action of your play. Plunge in!

Action should begin in an unaffected manner and progress easily from one scene to another. Study carefully the working scenario of "The Countess Charming." Note how smoothly the action flows in each scene. Every act of the characters tends to reveal their motives, their inner nature, in addition to furthering the action of the plot. Notice how smoothly the action glides from one scene to another without pain or effort.

Remember there must be sequence in the action. As previously stated, the events in your plot need not follow each other in chronological order, but they must follow in logical sequence. The action of your play must progress smoothly, logically, interestingly from the first scene to the second, from the second to the third, and so on to the end. Each scene must be the logical outcome of the preceding one, in a broad sense, though the continuous trend of the action may be temporarily halted to create suspense. Do not write a single scene for effect or for time. If there is no good reason for any action promptly eject it.

In your faithful endeavor to make the action in your manuscript advance as rapidly and evenly as possible, do not make the mistake of hurrying too fast. Do not imagine that something sensational, some startling new development of your plot, must take place every moment. Strengthen the possibilities of your plot wherever possible, but do not kill a man every two or three scenes just to liven things up. The action should not jump from one thrill to another.

Don't let your imagination run riot. Don't let the action of your play run away with the plot. Make it smooth and rapid—but not too rapid.

#### *How to Use Sub-Titles and Inserts.*

Sub-titles are the words and sentences scattered throughout the action of a photoplay and thrown on the screen. All sub-titles may be divided into two general classes: spoken titles, or actual quotations; and explanatory titles, or descriptive titles, as they are sometimes called. Sub-title five of "The Countess Charming" is an explanatory title. Sub-title six is a spoken title, and as such it is labeled.

A descriptive title is generally used to introduce a character; to

explain action which otherwise would take up too much film footage; to explain action not clear in itself; or to cover an elapse of time. Sub-title seven is used to introduce a character. Sub-title nine briefly explains action which otherwise would consume considerable footage if actually worked out in the play. In scene nine, a matron and her companion are seen gossiping, but their actions do not completely reveal exactly what they are talking about. Therefore sub-title eleven is introduced, and the whole thing is made clear. In scene twenty-seven there is a good example of a sub-title used to cover an elapse of time. Sub-title thirty-eight also serves the same purpose.

The "insert" is matter, or objects, other than sub-titles, inserted in a scene, and briefly interrupting the action of the play in order to clarify its meaning. A fine example will be found in scene two hundred thirty-seven of "The Countess Charming."

Do not make the mistake of telling something in a sub-title and then repeating it in action. In fact, you never should use a sub-title if it can be explained in action. It might be well to note that the use of explanatory titles in the middle of a scene is quite unusual, while a spoken title generally comes in the middle. It is customary for the explanatory title to precede the scene.

Every sub-title introduced requires for its exhibition several feet of film, the exact amount depending on the sub-title's length. This naturally subtracts from the total number of feet remaining for the picture itself. On account of this, you should content yourself with just as few sub-titles as you can in order to save for the action of the play every possible foot of film. If possible, make your plot clear without using any sub-titles; for the use of one is the frank confession that you are not able to bring out certain phases of your plot without resorting to the written word.

Keep your sub-titles as short and as crisp as possible. Fifteen or twenty words at the most is plenty. Sometimes it is not possible to condense, yet you should exert every effort to do so.

One very important reason why few sub-titles should be used is the fact that the patrons of moving picture theatres consist of a motley gathering of various nationalities, many of whom are unable to read English. Therefore, if much of the action of the play is told by sub-titles, the audience fails to enjoy the picture by missing the point entirely. So, if you can bring out any phase of the plot in action without wasting too much time, omit the sub-title. Try to make your script just as intelligible to the new Italian emigrant as it is to the college professor.

Many new writers fall into the habit of using explanatory sub-titles in every scene. In fact, I have seen photoplays by beginners in which the action of every scene was explained in a sub-title preceding the scene.

If, however, you can use a sub-title to advantage, do not hesitate one moment in writing it. An artistic sub-title often increases the value of a play. Some of Mary Pickford's productions are greatly increased in value by the clever sub-titles written in them by Miss Cooper, scenarist for Miss Pickford. What is more, a clever title often makes a picture. This was strikingly the case in "The Sixteenth



Wife," a melodrama which Vitagraph retitled into a farce—a big success due to clever sub-titles. Use sub-titles when necessary, but use them discreetly.

Try to avoid such monotonous expressions as, "The next day," "Two years later," "The following day," and "Six months later." This type of sub-title is like the speech labels of some of the past story writers, who always ended a piece of dialogue with, "said she," or "said he." Try to get variety in the wording of your titles. Study carefully all of the titles used in "The Countess Charming." They are excellent examples of first-class workmanship.

In your efforts to make your sub-titles short and crisp, do not make them vague and indefinite. Confusing sub-titles will ruin the best photoplay ever written. The audience must understand everything. Aim to write your sub-title so clearly that it *must* be understood. Also, it is possible to use too few inserts, to omit making a certain action clear, or to fail to indicate the passage of time. This must be watched carefully.

It has often been said that the sub-title has no place in the photoplay; that it is a "child without a parent." This is probably an exaggeration. A photoplay without a sub-title would be somewhat like a stage play without conversation—who would care to see one? To use the words of a writer in the *New York Tribune*: "'Sumurun' was all very well, but was it as good entertainment as 'Tea for Three' or 'Sleeping Partners'?"

"Some titles jump out and hit you. They never could seem a part of the story. They are the so-called decorative titles, done by misguided persons in their best Spencerian style. They have large curlicue capitals and sometimes wreaths of daisies or doves holding olive branches in their beaks. Titles should be so unobtrusive that one does not realize he is reading printed words.

"The trouble is that not enough attention is paid to the titles in a picture. What heroine could ever live this down, for instance? '*Brother, will you speak to my fiance and try to ascertain the cause of his coldness. Things have not been going smoothly of late between he and I.*' And yet we read that very title, supposedly spoken by one of the stars, and the picture was made by a well-known film corporation.

"And why do so many title writers yearn for the past tense? All of their remarks take the reminiscent form—they embrace retrospection and refuse to relinquish it. '*Mary Brown was a beautiful young teacher.*' '*The cabin stood on the edge of the desert.*' '*Robert loved his mother's maid, who was a pure and lovely girl.*'

Of course there are cases where we admit that titles are superfluous. It isn't necessary to say anything about it. All too frequently Mary isn't beautiful or young, but if she is people like to discover such little things for themselves. Let the pictures also speak for themselves.

"But if title writers insist upon usurping their rights, why not do it in the present tense? We certainly need titles, but we certainly need title writers, too, or perhaps final censors with, first of all, a sense of humor, then a knowledge of human nature, a knowledge of grammar, punctuation, the use of quotation marks, and who have taken a complete course in letter writing.



"Also, how often does a royal fiancée sign herself 'Princess Sonia' to a tender missive or Lydia Van Peyster write to 'Friend Paul' inviting him to dinner and signing herself 'Mrs. Van Peyster'! 'Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true'."

*The Close-up and the Semi-Close-up.*

A Close-up is a scene photograph with the camera near the object or action photographed. The Semi-close-up is a scene in which the camera is not close enough to the object, or action, to be a Close-up, yet is not distant enough to be a Long-shot. The Semi-close-up, then, is "in between" a Long-shot and a Close-up; it is a long Close-up or a short Long-shot.

The Close-up is nothing more than a close view of an object or an action. Formerly it was called a "bust," and was used to obtain a near view of the head and shoulders of a character. But to-day a close view of anything—head or hand, face or shoulders, foot or any part of the body, or anything in action—is called a Close-up. As previously explained, a still object—a newspaper, book or telegram—is called an insert.

The Semi-close-up is generally used to show a close view of two or more people—when a close-up would not be necessary or would not show them sufficiently to advantage. It is also used to bring out details of action—a thing the Long-shot often does not do.

A few years ago it was thought necessary to show the full figures of all the characters in every scene. D. W. Griffith thought a play would be more interesting if more detailed action were brought out. He conceived the idea of the Close-up. Now, if a director is in doubt, he always brings the camera as close to the object as possible.

There are many examples of the Close-up in "The Countess Charming." See scenes two and six. The Semi-close-up is well illustrated in scenes seven, nine and forty-three.

*The Iris, Dissolve and Lap-Dissolve.*

The first scene of most photoplays usually begins with the screen dark; gradually the scene appears, constantly becoming larger until the full scene has unfolded, somewhat as though we were viewing it through eyes slowly opening. This used to be called the "Fade-In"; to-day it is termed "Iris In." The name is derived from the iris diaphragm, an adjustable device for regulating the aperture of the lens of a camera. The action of the iris diaphragm somewhat resembles the action of the iris of an eye. Hence *its* name.

At the end of a play, the final scene often disappears slowly into darkness. This is termed "Iris Out"; formerly it was called "Fade Out."

Scene one, among many others in "The Countess Charming," shows the Iris In; scene two hundred sixty-two, the Iris Out.

The Iris In and Iris Out are also used to show an elapse of time, often with the sub-title, as in scenes twenty-seven and twenty-eight; and again without the sub-title, as in scenes forty-six and forty-seven. Generally the Iris In is used in a scene if the Iris Out was used in the preceding scene. If, however, a sub-title follows the Iris Out, it is not absolutely necessary to use the Iris In.

The Iris is also used to emphasize a person or thing. In this case the iris diaphragm is closed until only a small portion of the scene is discernable.

The Dissolve In and Dissolve Out are the same as the Iris, except that the scene disappears into a haze, or mist, or emerges from it. Or one scene may "dissolve into" another and "dissolve out" again into the preceding scene, as in scene two hundred one of "The Countess Charming." But this has another name. It is termed Lap-Dissolve. This effect is obtained by lapping the end of the negative of one scene over the beginning of the next scene. When this is pictured on the screen, the first scene gradually becomes indistinct; but, before it has entirely disappeared, another scene appears. And vice versa.

#### *Double Exposure.*

You have perhaps often witnessed scenes, especially in comedies, in which the character walked along the edge of a sky-scraper—a hazardous, not to say impossible, procedure. Such a scene is easily made, without risk, in this manner: The camera is first taken to the top of the building and a scene is photographed. Then the camera is taken to the studio, the film is rewound, and a scene is taken on the same film showing the comedian walking as though on the building—but all the while in perfect safety. This is a useful trick; it is called Double Exposure.

#### *Flash, Vision and Reverse Action.*

The Flash is a scene appearing on the screen only for a brief time. It is, then, merely a fleeting glimpse of a regular scene. Suppose you have shown a letter on the screen in, say, scene ten. The audience is given plenty of time to read it in this scene. Suppose it must be shown again, say in scene forty—perhaps this time in the hands of the recipient. This time it is "flashed" on the screen only long enough for the audience to recognize it as the letter in scene ten. The flash is used to save time, film footage, and to speed up the action.

You have often witnessed scenes in which, to a character in meditation, comes a vision of some person or thing. This is properly called a Vision. The effect is obtained by making a double exposure, already explained.

Have you ever witnessed a play in which a character jumped from the ground to the top of a building—an impossible feat? If so, you doubtless wondered how it was done. The character jumps from the building to the ground, or, if it is high, is let down by invisible wires. During the process, the scene is photographed—but the camera is running BACKWARD. When the film is completed and run properly in the picture, the effect is that of the character jumping from the ground to the top of the building. This is termed Reverse Action.

#### *The Cut-Back.*

The Cut-back is an arrangement of scenes whereby the action in a play is interrupted to show another scene, or set of scenes, and then returned to later. The Cut-back is invaluable for many reasons; it is constantly used in the best modern plays.



The Cut-back generally does one or more of the following three things: (1) Creates suspense, (2) covers a gap in action, or (3) eliminates the too frequent use of sub-titles.

1. *To Create Suspense.*—This is the most common use of the Cut-back. Remember that thrilling picture wherein the heroine is abducted by the "villian?" He carries her to an old mill and places her, bound and gagged, on a run-way slowly conveying her to a grinding death between great, ponderous, crushing wheels. But the hero hears of her capture! He starts to the rescue—but has some distance to cover. Here the Cut-back begins to be useful. The main action of the play—the scene in the mill—is constantly interrupted to show the hero hot-footing it to the girl's rescue—ever drawing nearer. The closer the girl draws to death in the grinding wheels, the closer her hero gets to the mill. And the action is constantly "cut-back." This creates suspense.

2. *Covering a Gap in Action.*—Suppose a murder is absolutely necessary to the telling of a story. The Board of Censorship will not pass a picture if the crime is actually depicted on the screen. The Cut-back saves the situation. The murder scene is shown until the assailant draws a gun, or knife; then the scene is interrupted and the action cut to another scene or character; then we quickly "cut-back" to the murder scene, which shows the victim dead and the murderer escaping or captured. There are many ways of covering a gap in action with the cut-back; the above is only one.

3. *Eliminating Sub-titles.*—In the murder scene described above, the Cut-back not only made the picture satisfactory so far as the Censors were concerned, but also rendered it unnecessary to introduce a sub-title. Again, suppose you introduce a dinner on the screen. It would be monotonous and wasteful to show the entire meal. So you merely show the guests as they sit down to the table, then cut to another scene or set of scenes, then shortly return to the dinner, and we see the meal ended. Thus the use of a sub-title is eliminated.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PHOTOPLAY TITLE

There has been a style in titles somewhat as in dress. At one time it was customary to use a certain fixed order of words. Later the fad was to use the character's name as a title. Then titles of color were used. But all the while, little real attention was paid to the importance of the title. Most writers were content to affix to their manuscript a general expression vaguely related to the plot, and let it go at that.

Of late, however, writers have begun to give the title its proper share of attention. They have come to realize that there are three important elements in successful photoplay writing; and, if a writer masters these, he is quite apt to be successful. The three elements in order of importance are: plot, synopsis and title. If you can evolve an original plot, comprehensively outline it in a well-written synopsis, and precede the whole with a satisfactory title, success is yours. As indicated above, plot is by far the most important element in photoplay writing. The ability to write a good synopsis is next in importance. The aptitude of selecting a good title is third. These three things are the successful triumvirate of photoplay writing.

#### *Why the Title is Important.*

There are two things which enable producers and exhibitors to advertise their photoplays successfully to the public. First, the "star" featured in the picture; and, second, the title of the play.

As time goes on, the star becomes less important. People are beginning to awaken to a realization of the fact that a highly celebrated actor featured in a play does not necessarily mean an entertaining production. In a great many instances, film companies have gone to enormous expense to employ some grand opera star or stage favorite to appear in a picture, because of the advertising value of their names. Frequently, these plays have been utter failures. For example, William Collier, a very funny and strikingly successful actor on the legitimate stage, was employed by Mack Sennett to appear in a few comedies. Mr. Collier's name had great advertising value; but, when his pictures were produced, they were generally said to be failures. Mr. Collier is funny of word and manner; therefore, he failed in the photoplay. DeWolf Hopper was featured at considerable expense in "Don Quixote." Mr. Hopper is a very successful stage comedian. His picture "Don Quixote" was not highly satisfactory. His style of humor was not adapted to the photoplay. Mary Garden, a talented and successful grand opera star, was pronounced by most critics a failure in "Thais." All this goes to demonstrate that, in the future, producers are likely to pay less attention to the star and more attention to the play. The story itself will come into its own; therefore, the story's title will be the main means of advertising the play and will assume more importance than it has to-day. Even at present the



title of a photoplay often has more "box-office" value—meaning it brings in more money to the exhibitor—than anything else. Knowing, then, that the title is of such tremendous importance, the new writer ought to know exactly what it should do.

*What the Title Should Do.*

The main purpose of the title is to advertise your play to the public. It may or it may not give a correct idea of what your play concerns. This is not absolutely necessary. But it *must* arrest the attention of the playgoer and make him want to see your photoplay.

Before a title can appeal to the public, however, the play must be accepted for production by some film company. But, before your play can be accepted, it must appeal to some editor. It is essential, therefore, that the title attract the editor.

You may think the editorial appeal is of secondary importance—that the plot of your story is supreme. True, it is; but you may be surprised to know the great attraction there often is in a good title. In looking through manuscripts, the editor often becomes very interested in a manuscript, without knowing anything about the plot, simply because the title appeals to him. Even before he reads a word of your synopsis, he is interested in your work—he is *deeply* interested in it, because you have piqued his curiosity. Perhaps you appealed to his personal interest. Maybe your title created in his mind an image of many dollars to be made through successfully advertising your play. Perhaps he immediately sensed the drawing power of your title. But, no matter what interests him, it is a fact that he must be interested, or *should be*; therefore, your first duty is to select a title that will appeal to the editor.

Appealing to the public is a different matter. Guy De Maupassant aptly said: "The public is composed of numerous groups crying out; console me, amuse me, satisfy me, touch me, make me dream, laugh, shudder, weep, think." And your title should do at least one of these things. It is not possible, perhaps, to incorporate all of these elements in one title; but, in some way, you must select a group of words that will "get to" the man on the street, the average fellow, the type that is in the great majority. Do not make the mistake of trying to select a high-sounding or pretty title. If you do, it will go over the head of the average person—and the vast majority of playgoers are "average" people.

If you will select a title that piques curiosity, you will find that your work will be given an instantaneous chance to prove itself worth while. If you stop to think, you know this is true. How often have you seen people stop in front of a motion picture theatre and look at the posters and pictures advertising the production inside? Some will see a title like, "The Wolves of Kultur," and immediately turn away, saying, "I don't want to see that. I've had enough of spies and plots and propaganda." You yourself perhaps often have decided to go to a certain theatre, and, when you arrived outside and saw what was on the bill, turned away, unsatisfied, not interested, perhaps even repelled by the title of the play. I once heard a bright man say he didn't care to go and see Griffith's, "The Birth of a Nation," because there was something about the title that somehow

made him feel that the production itself was a long-drawn-out, dry, uninteresting affair, even though he had often heard it said that the play was well worth seeing. And it surely was! This is not a criticism of Mr. Griffith's title, but merely an example to show how titles effect people.

Compare the lack of interest in such titles as "The Village Convict," a story by C. H. White, or "The Shot," by Paushkin, with such suggestive and appealing titles as, "The Upper Berth," by Crawford, or the "Riders of the Purple Sage," a Fox production, or "Hearts of the World," by Mr. Griffith. The last three titles are not quoted as perfect examples, but merely as being far more interesting to the average person than most of those we see. Knowing what the title should do, we ought to find out just what constitutes a good title.

*What Constitutes A Perfect Title.*

A perfect title should be: apt, or appropriate; specific; interesting, or attractive; short; new; literary; sonorous; suggestive. Often it is not possible to incorporate all of these qualities in one title, but you should if you can.

An apt, appropriate, or fitting title is one applying particularly to your manuscript. In many cases, the fitting title will not suggest itself until your story is written. Examples of fitting titles are: "Many Waters," by Margaret Deland, and "The Window that Monsieur Forgot," by Mary Imlay Taylor.

In your zeal to select a fitting title, do not overlook the fact that it must also be interesting and attractive. It is not necessary to say more here about making titles attractive. This has been covered under the section dealing with appeal to the editor.

Many beginners, however, fail to make their titles specific. The new writer (not to mention the experienced writer who ought to know better) is apt to handicap his work with such general titles as, "Two Friends," by Kipling; or "A Love Story," by Webster. Avoid this. Narrow your title down to some specific phase of your plot. If possible, make it a title applying only to your particular manuscript, as O'Brien did when he thought of "The Diamond Lens."

Try to make your title from three to five words in length. It is apt to be clumsy and awkward if it is longer. Do not, however, go to the extreme and make your title so short that it is vague and meaningless. Edward Belamy did this when he named one of his productions "Lost."

By a new title is meant one that is fresh and unhackneyed. The commonplace title often spoils a play. Who would want to see a play with a title like, "All's Well That Ends Well," when just around the corner they were exhibiting a play with such a fresh title as, "Rosemary For Remembrance."

It is not absolutely essential that the photoplaywright select a literary title—one the words of which bring out shades of beauty and meaning and are arranged in exact rhetorical order. I say it is not essential, because the average playgoer might not be any more impressed with a rhetorical title than with any other; in fact, a large



proportion of the people who view photoplays might be more impressed with an illiterate title. However, if it is possible for you to choose between two titles, one lacking in literary qualities and the other possessing them, by all means choose the latter. There are two titles often given as examples of literary quality and the opposite; "A Purple Rhododendron," by John Fox, Jr., is literary. "A Ride With a Mad Horse in a Freight Car," by W. H. H. Murray, is quite the opposite.

A sonorous title sounds well; its words and syllables follow each other in a smooth, pleasant, attractive manner. Compare the euphonious qualities of "Ligeia," by Poe, with "The Betrothal of Elypholate Yingst," by Helen Martin, or "The Glenmutchkin Railway," by Aytoun. In making your title smooth and pleasant in sound, do not go to the extreme and weaken it so that it fails to draw attention to your work.

A suggestive title brings up pictures in the reader's mind. For instance, "The Upper Berth" starts the mind thinking of certain interesting possibilities—is suggestive—and makes you want to read the story. "The Severed Hand" is suggestive of mystery; therefore, it is interesting. "Marjorie Daw" suggests the character story; "The Deserted House" suggests the story of setting. "The Cannibals and Mr. Buffum" suggests humor, while "The Courting of Dinah Shadd" suggests love, humor, and, perhaps, character. It will be well to call the beginner's attention to the fact that it is important, if practicable, to have a title suggest love, for love appeals to nearly everyone.

Of course, it is a difficult matter to say exactly why a title pleases or displeases, why it interests or fails to interest, because different people have different tastes; but it is quite likely that the effectiveness of a title depends in a great measure on this quality of suggestion. It is not even an exaggeration to say that many titles are poor because they lack suggestive qualities. Consequently, it should be the photoplaywright's constant aim to select a title that will "make pictures in the other fellow's mind."

To sum up, a good title should be apt, specific, attractive, new, literary, sonorous and suggestive.

#### *How And When To Choose A Title.*

There is a simple, easy way to select a title for your manuscript. First, analyze your plot; find out what phase of your plot distinguishes your play from other photoplays written around the same, or similar, basic idea. The average play is built up of common incidents which have been used again and again by other writers. But, in an original manuscript, these incidents are carefully arranged and put together in such a manner that, somewhere in the script, probably near the climax, the play takes a turn, or twist, which makes the work different from other plays made up of the same elements. Right here is where you should select the title. Make it tell something about that *special phase of your plot*, that new "twist" you put in your work, and you will find that, in most cases, it will be apt and specific. If your plot is interesting, your title will be attractive. Then it is up to you to refine it in such a manner that it will be sonorous, suggestive and

literary. But, above all, make your title first interesting, next suggestive, then new, appropriate and sonorous, and, finally, literary.

The title is first in position on any manuscript. This does not mean, however, that you must have a title before you write a play. The fact of the matter is, 'tis wise, and often necessary, as previously indicated, to select the title last. This is due to the fact that a writer may understand his theme and know what his characters are going to do, even have his script worked out in his own mind to the minutest detail before he begins to write, yet he may not have the faintest idea what the title is going to be. So that, in most cases, it is necessary to wait and select the title after the play is finished.

Titles selected before the script is written are generally vague and uninteresting. If selected last, they are more apt to be specific and appropriate.

*Taking A Clever Title And Building A Play Around It.*

In some cases, however, a title first suggests itself, then, in turn, suggests a story to be built around the title. That is, having thought of a good expression for a title, a certain train of thought is started in an author's mind. Thus he is able to construct a play round the title.

D. W. Griffith's famous play "Intolerance" is a good example. Mr. Griffith undoubtedly had the title of this play in his mind before the script was constructed. He had been turning over in his mind for a long time the fact that an intolerant condition of mind, or action, on the part of any individual, or society of individuals, is harmful to the general well-being of society. He knew that intolerance had been in many instances the curse of a nation. Acting on this knowledge, he constructed a master play around the title; a play dealing with four distinct epochs of history, each epoch closely related in motive to the other, and the whole cleverly portraying the evil influence of intolerance.

Again, consider Herbert Brenon's "War Brides," featuring the incomparable Nazimova. Here is a fine example of taking a title and building a play around it.

Remember Charlie Chaplin in "A Dog's Life"? This was another case of taking a title and building a play around it. According to the story, this is how it happened.

Harry Lauder paid all-the-world's Charlie a friendly visit. After Chaplin had showed the Scot the elaborate fixtures in his place, he inquired: "Well, what do you thing of it?" Lauder jokingly made this ironical reply: "It's a dog's life you are leading, Chaplin, a dog's life." Presto! Chaplin had an idea. He took the expression "a dog's life," and built a play around it.

The titles of plays constructed in this manner usually are too vague and unspecific. As a rule, they sum up the play's theme in a few words. So far as the title is concerned, therefore, this is not the best way to work. The new writer perhaps will write better plays and think of better titles if he writes his plays first and selects his titles last.



*What Titles To Avoid.*

Do not handicap your manuscript with a hackneyed, commonplace title like, "A Little Child Shall Lead Them." No one would want to see a play with such a title if he could see "Cupid a la Carte."

Don't choose a general title like, "A Love Story," when there are plenty you can find that will apply particularly to the manuscript, as does "A Passion in the Desert."

Don't condemn your play to defeat by labeling it with an uninteresting title, such as "The Village Convict," when there are so many that will make a person deeply anxious to see your play. Consider "Heart of Darkness," by Joseph Conrad.

Don't make your play objectionable by using a sensational title like, "In Love with the Czarina," when there are many temperate phrases to serve your purpose.

Don't reveal your plot in your title, as Poe did in "The Premature Burial," unless you intentionally do so as he did. In this case, he wanted his readers, even before they read his story, to know that there would be a premature burial. He intended to arouse their interest in this manner and surprise them at the end. To do this is such an unusual procedure, however, and requires such delicate treatment, that the beginner had better avoid it.

Don't handicap your manuscript with a depressing, sorrowful, gloomy title, such as "The Convict's Return." There are so many pleasant things to advertise to the public.

Shun the *or* and *and* style of title used in dime novels, "The Test, or Doing His Bit."

Avoid alliterative titles, such as "The Pit and the Pendulum." Many critics consider this title good; others think it is not. At any rate, Poe was treading on dangerous ground when he selected it.

Avoid the newspaper title, "Saved by a Bootblack"; or extremely fantastical titles like, "A Day on Mars"; or anecdotal, "A Trip to New York;" or extremely sensational, "When Love Came;" or repulsive, as, "A Murder in the Rue Morgue."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE PHOTOPLAY STAGE.

#### *Its Scope.*

The scope, or view, encompassed by a photoplay camera is commonly called the "photoplay stage," no matter whether in a studio or out-of-doors. The photoplay stage, then, may seem to the beginner to be quite a large area; but, in reality, it is not so large as it at first seems.

The fact of the matter is, when an actor is standing within fifteen or twenty feet of the camera, he must be cautious in his movements or he will get out of the picture; that is, he will step outside the range of the camera, and will not appear on the screen. In writing your synopsis, therefore, you must not try to make any of the action envelop a great area. If an interior, it is impossible to show all of a room. Only part of it, perhaps half, can be used.

#### *Lighting in the Studio.*

An up-to-date studio is thoroughly equipped with high-powered Cooper-Hewitts, which make it possible to take a picture at any time of the day or night, without respect to the sun. These lights throw a peculiar blue-green color over everybody, but make the taking of a picture at any time a simple matter.

But, in developing a plot, the beginner must be careful how he introduces candles, lanterns, lamps, and the like, into his manuscript. Do not try to use scenes that depend for their success upon difficult lighting effects, unless you thoroughly understand studio lighting. If you do, the probabilities are that you will work out something impossible to produce and thereby handicap the sale of your manuscript. Try to avoid as much as possible the use of night scenes. The only scene of this type easy to produce is one in which a character enters the room with a dark lantern, and flashes it around on the walls. This is easily pictured because the actor carries an unlighted lantern and the circle of light thrown on the wall, supposed to be from his lantern, is really a spot light operated by a second party. The best way to be sure not to attempt impossible lighting effects is to carefully study the different photoplays you see on the screen and notice the diverse styles of lighting. Follow other writers' methods. And be reasonable.

#### *Limitations and Restrictions of the Photoplay.*

Do not attempt the impracticable in your photoplay. Nearly everything is *possible* in photoplay producing, but many things are *impracticable*. For example, let us suppose a number of horsemen dash into your picture. The hero is wounded; falls to the ground. His pursuers dash past. The heroine rides to the rescue. All this is possible but impractical, for the reason that the dust will create a haze to dim the picture. Of course, the scene can be made by holding up the action—the camera being stopped—while the dust settles. But



unless your script is unusually good, it will be rejected in favor of one requiring less trouble to produce.

Do not make it necessary for any of the actors in your drama, or any of the studio people, to risk their lives in order to produce your work. Of course, many "risky" scenes have been, and always will be, photographed; but, if this is to be done, the writer had better leave it to the producer himself, and not try to write it into his own manuscript of his own initiative. If the editor finds your work justifies such a risk, he will see that it is taken.

Also avoid writing about action requiring extraordinary climatic effects and unusual out-of-door settings. Don't insist that the sun shine in a certain scene, or that it rain in another, or that there be a snowstorm in a third. Leave all this to the producer. Only write plays dealing with special settings of this character when you actually know that a certain company is in the market for them.

Remember, too, that the photoplay camera is very heavy and must be set upon an extremely strong tripod. Therefore, it is not easy for the cameraman to climb around in trees and get in the uncomfortable positions a tourist does with a kodak. Of course, such things *are* done, but generally of the director's own free will. It is better for the beginner not to write about strange and difficult action and settings, leaving this work to more experienced writers.

When writing your play, constantly aim to spare the producer all unnecessary expense. If, however, your play really deserves a big scene, introduce it, but be impartial in your judgment, and don't let the fact that the script is yours carry you away, while you write action in such impossible places that your work is doomed to failure.

## CHAPTER X.

### WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT.

#### *The Human Element.*

The human element—heart interest and human interest—sells more manuscripts than anything else. No matter how cleverly written your work is, how carefully constructed your plot, how gripping the events in your play, it will fail if it lacks heart interest or human interest. You must capture the interest and sympathy of your audience. This is the stuff that sells manuscripts. Make the public admire your hero and heroine. Make them dislike your “villain.” Move them to laughter, tears, even hatred. Make them think. To do this you must give them human nature.

The quickest way to reach a person's mind is through his heart. Love generally goes to the heart; therefore, nearly every successful photoplay contains heart interest or a touch of love interest. Heart interest, of course, is not love interest. Heart interest may exist without love interest, but love interest cannot exist without heart interest. Your work will be cold, barren, lifeless if it does not contain heart interest in some form. And it is only in remote cases that a photoplay meets with any great success if it does not contain a love story. While, on the other hand, some of the greatest successes of all time have been written around love. Most people are subject to love at one time or another. Consequently, a love story appeals to the majority. No matter how young or old your audience is, they like to see love portrayed. The youthful gaze at it in anticipation; the aged, in fond remembrance. And remember that the average person, when witnessing your play, unconsciously thinks he is actually living the incidents presented on the screen. The fifteen-year-old girl, the middle-aged matron, the sweet-faced grandmother, all imagine, for the moment, that they are the object of the manly hero's ardent love. This is why the photoplay is so popular. It lifts people out of the commonplace things of life and puts them on a higher level where they long to be. A love story will elevate them in this manner quicker than any other type of manuscript.

Henry Christine Warnack has so cleverly written on this subject this his words are here quoted in full:

“Why is it, since everybody is trying to write motion picture plays that the studios all over the country cry out that they are starving for stories?”

“Mostly, the answer is that our stories are not human. They are things we think up. They are mechanically clever. They have plot and action, but they are not human. They have artifice, but they are also artificial. They have none of that spontaneity of the thing that springs from the heart. They are not written with a glow and they bring no new joy to the beholder when once they have been filmed. They have none of that stuff that makes the bud and bloom



of springtime. They amuse the mind, but the laughter they provoke is not from the heart, and they have no tears.

"Speaking of the human note in stories, at least two of David Wark Griffith's recent great successes have been based on the simplest of stories wherein he has the leading characters merely a girl and a boy. He gives them no other name than these, nor has he need of other names. Life holds nothing more wonderful than a girl and a boy and the love between them that springs like a pure flower from holy ground. Two shall look and tremble; afterwards, nations follow.

"We have been striving too much for effects and have not thought enough about naturalness. We have been fascinated by the magic of the camera and have let fine mechanics put the text out of mind. We can have only one item, and that is life.

"One thing we dare not forget; it is that the world is starving for love. Any story that has not love for its cornerstone is short of the greatness belonging to drama. All other passions have their place in the wonderful fabric of life, but love excels them all.

"To-day the good story must also have purpose and it must have light. Love is the degree of understanding. Sacrifice has such a wide appeal because it manifests the unselfishness of a great love and becomes its understudy. Nobility is never blind.

"Generally speaking, I should say that the safest rule for story building is to choose a theme and a set of circumstances that contain and express deep feeling in a way that will arouse the feelings of an audience. Let a story be flawless in all other respects, yet if it cannot make the people feel frequently, I maintain that it is not a success. I place the quality to arouse the feelings of the public as of first value in any story, and the more natural and unstrained the effort in this line appears to be, the surer will be the effect."

*The Popular Appeal.*

The great majority of the people who go to see photoplays are of the middle class. Better pictures are constantly being made—pictures that will appeal to the more educated—but the average motion picture theatre would have to close its doors if it did not exhibit stories that reach the heart of the average individual. The photoplay is a cheap amusement; that is why it is so well patronized. The average working man can take his entire family to see a photoplay for no more than it would cost him to buy one cheap seat at a theatrical performance. Hence, the great need of pleasing the ordinary individual.

For a good example of appeal to the masses, refer to scene fourteen of "The Countess Charming." Here Vandergrift, the "heavy type of financier," is made to say of the Red Cross, "It exasperates me—this everlasting soliciting, begging—grafting! They get no money of mine!" Julian is quick to rebuke him with, "I resent such a sneer, sir, at great-hearted workers for a wonderful cause." And later, "Some day, Mr. Vandergrift, the government will largely confiscate such swollen fortunes as yours and apply them to real human needs. I hope to God it may be soon!" This goes to the heart of the audience. They admire Julian; they dislike Vandergrift—just as the author wants them to.

In your haste to please the majority, do not overlook the minority. Simply remember that anyone enjoys best the thing he understands most. Therefore, while all cannot understand some things, the average playgoer is not necessarily unintelligent. The production and success of such plays as "Les Miserables," featuring William Farnum, proves that the average American enjoys high-class plays; but the probabilities are that he enjoys more those plots dealing with everyday American events, such as, "Say, Young Fellow," with Douglas Fairbanks, or "De Luxe Annie," featuring Norma Talmadge.

Do not attempt to write any particular class of photoplays. Of course, writers often find it easier to construct certain types of plays; but you will do well to strive constantly for versatility. Do not content yourself with limited writing. Do not, for example, write only Western dramas. Most companies do not produce them. Try also to write society stories, war plays, and so on. Try to make your work appeal to different classes of people. Aim to write for all classes.

In this connection it will be well to note what Ludovic Halevy, the French novelist, has to say: "We must not write simply for the refined, the blase, and the squeamish. We must write for that man who goes there on the street with his nose in his newspaper and his umbrella under his arm. We must write for that fat, breathless woman whom I see from my window, as she painfully climbs into the Odeon omnibus. We must write, consequently, for the *bourgeois*, if it were only to refine them, to make them less *bourgeois*. And if I dared, I should say that we must write even for fools."

What a worldly-wise man was Halevy!

*Choose a Familiar Subject.*

In casting about for suitable subjects for your plays, do not make the mistake of attempting to build a play around some theme with which you are not familiar. If you have always lived in a small town, do not attempt to write plays of city life. You may be able to do it and do it well; but the safer procedure is to choose a subject from your own surroundings. There always will be a demand for stories with rural settings, so there really is no good reason why you should turn to the White Lights for material. There are just as many plots in your life, even if you live in the country, as there are in the lives of city folks. Perhaps more. Of course, it is much easier to imagine you see more romance in the other fellow's existence! This is probably due to the fact that most people think that their life is more humdrum and less romantic than the lives of all other people. But you should not be led astray by such thoughts. Apply your imagination to the events constantly happening all around you—even in your own life—and you will find no difficulty in choosing a subject with which you are perfectly familiar.

You probably will not, however, be able to find material in your own life, and the lives of your friends, which can be used exactly in the form in which you find it. You will have to take out certain elements and insert others. Actual life rarely makes suitable photoplay material exactly as it transpires. Here, again, you must use your imagination.



There is no reason why a person living in the country should not write of the city; but, since there is plenty of material in *every* life, why try to write business plays, or society dramas, or war plays, if you have spent most of your days in an entirely different atmosphere? Why risk failure through ignorance of your subject? In order to be salable, a manuscript must be sincere. Before you can write sincerely, you must have an intimate knowledge of your subject. This is the best reason in the world why you should confine your early efforts to the writing of those things with which you are well acquainted.

On the other hand, if you live in the city, do not attempt stories with a rural flavor. The city furnishes enough elements without your having to resort to outside influence. Take New York's East Side for example, or Wall Street, or the gay life of Broadway. There is so much material for the city writer that he never should be obliged to look outside for suitable themes.

Writing in *The Moving Picture World*, E. W. Sargent gives some excellent advice on this subject. He says:

"If you live in the country, try to put the country on paper. If you are a dweller in the cities, seek the streets and city life for inspiration. An editor from the West commented the other day on the splendid field lying fallow in New York's East Side, and yet it is seldom that a story of the East Side is written that 'gets over,' not because there are no photoplaywrights on the East Side, but because they are all busy writing society plays and stories of business life, passing unheeded the wonderful pathos of the section of the town in which they live. With half the imagination they use in mapping out a story of high society, they could weave about the life they see the tender veil of poetry and make the sordid almost sacred with tenderness of touch. In the same way, the girl who lives uptown wants to write about settlement workers and Salvation Army lassies, and the absence of convincing color sends the story back."

By advising the writer to treat only of those subjects with which he is familiar it is not meant that he must write only of those things coming within the range of his personal experience. Marion Crawford and George Eliot wrote of experiences never felt and places never seen. They had great imaginations. Furthermore, they knew the art of building a story around what might be aptly termed "second hand knowledge." That is, if they couldn't get material by personal experience, they got it from friends, or acquaintances, or books, or periodicals; but, no matter how they got it, they got it just the same, and they got it *correctly*. Therefore, their work was sincere.

You can do the same. If, after you have succeeded in selling your stories dealing with subjects well-known to you, you decide to write about foreign themes, first read extensively on the subject. Find out the truth about the thing you want to write. Look it up in books; go to the library if you have one in your city; read what books are in your family and those you can borrow from your friends. No matter how you get your information, be sure you *do* get it; and be sure that you get it true to life. Then it will be reasonably safe for you to attempt the theme in mind.

There is this element of uncertainty, however. You may know thoroughly the conditions and circumstances about what you intend to write; but the fact that they are not your own experiences may make it rather difficult for you to correctly interpret the different characters' reactions to certain circumstances. It is a difficult matter to say just what a person will do under certain conditions, and, unless you have "gone through" it yourself, you may not be able to tell it sincerely.

Jules Verne wrote of conditions and things never seen. He wasn't an extensive traveler, yet to read some of his books you might be inclined to think he had traveled all over the world. He thoroughly and convincingly wrote his book, "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," yet we all know he was never that far down. In fact, he had but very little personal knowledge of the sea. He also wrote, "A Tour of the World in Eighty Days," but he never toured the world in that time. The secret of his success was great imagination and extensive reading.

But, where Jules Verne succeeded, it is safe to say that most beginners would fail. Therefore, it is better for them not make the attempt. Until your name and work become familiar to a number of editors, you should confine your efforts to writing about your own experiences; that is, about themes with which you are familiar.

Should you attempt to write on a historical subject, or something foreign to your own experience, be sure that, before you begin to write, you have a thorough knowledge of your subject. Do not endow historical characters with characteristics they never possessed. The moving picture, among other things, is highly educational. Therefore, producers must be very careful in producing historical subjects, or any other subject for that matter. Everything must be strictly accurate. All this means that, if you attempt unfamiliar subjects, you will have to spend a great deal of time in a reference room. You will be obliged to read a great many books before you can even begin your script.

#### *Write of People and Places That Interest You.*

It is important that you write on subjects interesting to yourself, or with which you are in sympathy. A writer cannot interest an audience in his work unless he himself is interested in it. If you are going to arouse any passion in your spectators, if you are going to make them feel anger, hatred, contempt, you yourself must first feel it.

Suppose stories of poverty and tenement life are popular. Determined to deal with a popular subject, you decide to write a play of tenement life. Perhaps you have some knowledge of the subject, but are not particularly interested in it because it does not appeal to you. In fact, all the environment of the tenement district may be somewhat repulsive to your tastes. Still you are anxious to sell your work, so attempt the subject. You spend a lot of time on your play. Discouraging as it may seem, the chances are the script will never sell, for it will not be possible for you to inject the necessary punch into the subject, not being deeply interested in tenement life. A similar script written by one who had done tenement work of his own free



will would readily find a sale, all other things being equal, while yours would be rejected.

*Choose Unusual Subjects.*

It is also virtually important that, in choosing a subject, you select something out of the ordinary. Try to avoid the commonplace themes which have been worked to death by the average writer. Of, if you must treat of a subject rather ordinary, try to write about it in an unusual manner.

Do not, however, be grotesque in your attempt to be unusual. In your effort to be out of the ordinary, do not be impractical or impossible. With the possible and practicable always in view, make a tremendous effort to get out of the rut, to traverse untrodden fields, No matter where you live, or in what circumstances you are, there are everywhere about you plenty of subjects which easily could be worked into very unusual productions.

Don't hesitate to write about the unusual for fear that it will be difficult to find an editor to produce your work. Editors are constantly on the lookout for things out of the ordinary; and, if you can produce an unusual photoplay, still true to life and practicable, you will have no difficulty whatever in selling. The chances are ten to one that it will bring you much more than a commonplace production.

*Write Only Plays of Action.*

Many subjects are not suitable for photoplays because they lack action; that is, in order to do justice to their theme, dialogue and description are essential. Before you attempt to write on any subject, find out if you can do it justice in the photoplay. Ask yourself if description and dialogue are necessary to bring out the plot in a satisfactory manner. If either are needed, drop the theme like you would a hot coal. For the great need in photoplays is *action*, and the value of the few words of explanation thrown on the screen must not be over-estimated.

For this reason, it is poor policy for the beginner to attempt detective stories. The usual detective story depends, in a large measure, on dialogue and explanation by the author. The writer spends a great deal of his time talking about the detective hero's method of deduction. Very rarely real action occurs. Furthermore, in most detective stories, the knot is usually tied before the story begins. This is difficult to portray in the photoplay unless a long explanation is made at the opening. Such openings are not wanted. This does not mean, however, that it is impossible to write detective plays successfully. It has been done; it is being done. Take, for example, the picturization of the magazine story, "The Gray Ghost." While this was not generally conceded to be a photoplay of exceptionally high quality, nevertheless, it was dramatized in a satisfactory manner, and strongly appealed to certain classes of playgoers.

Most detective stories treat of murders and certain criminal practices. But the writer cannot depict murder on the screen, or anything criminal, without getting in trouble with the censors, unless he is skillful. For this reason, the detective story is objectionable.

If, however, you are able to write detective stories in a plausible

manner, by all means *do* write them; for, though the art is difficult, it is by no means impossible. You will find it an easy matter to sell a good detective story for a very substantial sum.

*Select Characters That Create Sympathy.*

We have seen that plot is a struggle, a never-ending conflict. Before there can be struggle, however, there must be antagonism. Each play must therefore exhibit a protagonist and an antagonist. To oppose the good in your play, there must be evil. But, in writing of the evil characters, you must be exceedingly careful not to let them perform actions which might gain sympathy for them. In other words, the people who witness your play must be constantly in sympathy with your hero and not with his opponent. Be careful to create very little, if any, pity for the evil-doer. Unless you are cautious in this respect, the audience will be dissatisfied when things go against the "villain."

In order to make your play a success, your characters must arouse the sympathy of the audience. Therefore, in writing a play in which the hero commits a wrong, it becomes vitally necessary for you to show that there was a powerful motive for his act—that it could not be avoided—if you expect the audience to be in sympathy with him, though not necessarily approving his act.

On the other hand, when a crime is committed by an antagonistic character, you must be careful to prove that he was not morally justified in committing the crime. You must do this in order that the audience will not pity him. The evil deeds of the dark forces in your play should not be morally justifiable, however; but they *must* be actuated by a fully sufficient motive.

*The Happy Ending.*

There are three things without which any life is sadly incomplete: "Faith, hope and love." It has been said that the greatest of these is love. However that may be, it is certainly true that the average person's life is made up, in no small degree, of hope. Much of life is built upon hope. Hope often makes life endurable—the hope that things will adjust themselves eventually, or be better to-morrow, and that everything will come out all right in the end. The average individual takes up his burden each day with the expectation that, by so doing, he will eventually reach a brighter goal. In fact, most everyone is constantly centering their mind on the hope element.

It is the most natural thing in the world, then, that people should look for hope in photoplays. While your characters are undergoing a severe trial, the audience is constantly hoping that their misfortunes are only temporary, and that, in the end, better conditions will prevail. For this reason, the tragic ending has steadily declined in popularity. We have reached the point where it is almost impossible to sell a manuscript unless it has a happy ending.

This does not mean that there must not be an element of tragedy in your plot. There is no reason why misfortune should not be allowed to overtake some of your characters; this may be desirable, even necessary. But before your play ends, the majority of your characters should find happiness, peace and love. Before the final scene of your



play vanishes from the screen, the lives of your main characters should be filled with hope and happiness—if this be realistically possible.

Do not understand by this that, in the last scene of your play, the hero and heroine must fondly embrace, or hurriedly marry, or go through any of the “stock room” endings tacked on most photoplays. It is possible, and altogether desirable, to end your script in a different way. But no matter just how it ends, no matter whether the girl actually marries the boy or not, the last scenes should at least *suggest* peace and happiness, in order that the audience will leave the theatre feeling that the future is hopeful.

The vital need of the happy ending becomes readily apparent when you recall that most people, in watching a photoplay, unconsciously live the events themselves. If they see an interesting play, during which much misfortune befalls the main characters, but happiness comes at last, they are satisfied. But if misfortune all through the play is capped with a tragic ending, the audience is apt to take it all to heart, and leave the theatre in an unhappy frame of mind. This is not desirable for reasons too obvious to explain.

#### *The Picturesque Element.*

Every photoplay should contain the picturesque element. Some themes, otherwise good in themselves, necessitate homely treatment; perhaps the background is lacking in beauty. But, even in such extreme cases, it is necessary to add picturesque elements to the plot, not only to make the play more pleasant to the eye, but also by way of contrast.

Background and setting are not of primary importance, but they are important nevertheless. You will find that often one of the most vital elements of attraction in your work will be the setting in which your plot develops. The background in a photoplay is much the same to the photoplay as the setting is to a short story. Therefore, it is highly desirable for the photoplaywright to read what has been said in Part One of this book under “Setting.”

#### *Satisfying Market Demands.*

When writing your plays, keep one eye on your script and the other on the photoplay market. There are certain types of plays which editors do not want, and other types which they are mighty anxious to get. It goes without saying that you want to write the latter; therefore, before you begin to write any particular type, find out if it is in demand.

In this connection, remember that certain classes of plays are “hatched up” in the studio—written by staff writers. If one of the studio writers learns that certain peculiar types of plays are wanted by his company, he is, of course, wise to write them. But there are enough exceedingly popular subjects everywhere to supply you with so much material that you will not have to resort to writing about subjects the demand for which is limited.

## CHAPTER XI

### THINGS YOU SHOULD NOT WRITE ABOUT

The preceding chapter has indicated the importance of knowing what to write about. It is also vital for the beginner to know what he should *not* write about, for there are many subjects which, in themselves, make the sale of a photoplay practically impossible.

*Impossible, Impracticable and too Expensive Subjects.*

The beginner often writes about a subject that is impossible or impracticable to produce. He does this because his knowledge of photoplay requirements is often limited; or he outdoes himself in an attempt to produce something extraordinary; or, having seen so many impracticable pictures on the screen, he is led to believe that the average motion picture company is anxious to produce the spectacular.

As to what is possible in the way of stage equipment to carry out a plot, the writer must be guided by his own judgment. There is no rule except common sense. Producers can provide almost anything, such as, automobile, mansions, and so forth; but they can't easily wreck passenger trains and destroy battleships.

Always remember that each scene must be posed before the camera. All settings must be built by stage hands. Therefore, army battles, shipwrecks, train wrecks, and the like, are not only impracticable, but highly expensive. If you let your characters indulge in these gentle pastimes, your chances of making sales are few.

"Big scenes" are not only expensive and impracticable; they often are not worth the trouble. People care less and less about the spectacular. There is far more effect, power and artistry in a simple scene, well-planned, skillfully directed, ably acted. Very often scenes costing only a few dollars will reach the heart of an audience when the more spectacular fails.

The author has seen hundreds of otherwise good manuscripts returned with the simple remark, "Too expensive to produce." Try, therefore, to be economical. But do not imagine that producers are penurious. They are quite the contrary, yet the photoplaywright should not make it obligatory for them to spend any great amount of money. Let them decide whether they will or not. If they think your work warrants an expensive scene, they will provide it; but you should not handicap the sale of your manuscript by insisting on the scene yourself.

Leave out of your plot all action requiring unusual scenic effects or elaborate stage settings. Of course, a powerful theme should be well-handled with respect to setting; but it is best to treat of your theme in a general way regarding the exact location, and leave the entire matter in the hands of the producer. If the action of your plot takes you to an unusual place, the filming of which will cost considerable, ask yourself if the same action could not be well worked out in a less expensive location. You might think a great number of people



are required to produce a certain scene. No doubt it would be very effective to have your hero quarrel with the heroine in some elaborate scene, a ballroom for example. But this would require a great number of "extras," when the same scene would be just as effective, even more effective because of centralization of interest, if it occurred in a quiet room of the girl's home.

#### *Children and Animals in Pictures.*

A great many photoplays have been produced in which a trick animal has been featured. Mack Sennett has often used in his comedies a very intelligent dog. Horses with special training have also been utilized. These pictures are generally so appealing that many beginners immediately decide they must write one. Here they make a big mistake, for the average company is not equipped with trained animals and are, therefore, unable to produce such manuscripts.

If, however, you have an excellent plot absolutely requiring the use of some sort of trained animals, the best thing for you to do is to take the matter up with some company before you attempt to write the script. Do not waste time on the play unless you first find out that there is a possibility of selling it.

For the same reason, you should not attempt to write photoplays requiring the use of children; that is, children skilled in dramatic art. Fox has produced some excellent plays in which the Lee kiddies were featured. They made a decided hit. But it is not advisable for the new writer to attempt this type of production unless he previously makes arrangements with some company to consider his work. In writing your first plays, you will do well to confine yourself to subjects that can be produced in most any studio. This will greatly increase your chance of success.

#### *Costume Plays.*

The first thing some beginners want to write are plays requiring the use of elaborate costumes of romantic days gone by. Such productions are called "costume plays." A great many of them have been produced, and always will be produced; but, as a rule, they are written in the studio by staff writers, or are written by free-lance writers at the request of some particular producer. You can readily see, therefore, what small chance a beginner would have of selling a costume play. There is scarcely one chance in a hundred that he would find a producer who was ready and willing to go to the tremendous expense of producing his script.

It is just as easy, in fact much easier, to write plays of the present day, in which characters appear in their regular clothes. To write such manuscripts requires no research work, while to write costume plays you must diligently study the customs and costumes of the period you wish to portray.

#### *All About the Censors.*

The National Board of Censorship is a committee made up of men and women of various occupations, who review and pass on all photoplays produced, deciding whether or not the film in question should be allowed to go before the public. In addition to the National Board of Censorship, there are state boards which also pass on all films and

decide whether they shall be exhibited in their own particular state. We also further find in various cities municipal boards which function in the same way as the state and national bodies, with respect, however, only to their own city.

In many localities, the Board of Censorship goes to extremes and often bars subjects already passed by the National Board. In other cases, they very foolishly cut out parts of films, often spoiling the picture.

Because of the fact that the censors are often extreme in their judgment, writers must be exceedingly careful about what they let their characters do. If, however, you write as your conscience dictates, tempering it with a sense of decency, the probabilities are that your plays will not meet with any serious objection. But be careful not to introduce scenes inviting objection, simply because you have seen them make a decided hit in other productions. Just because *one* author "got by," don't try it yourself. You may not be so fortunate.

The Board of Censorship does not give an actual list of things they object to. This is probably because a certain action might be objectionable in one play but not in another. In other words, whether or not a scene is objectionable depends largely on the author's manner of handling the subject. The following list, however, is very apt to cover all of the general subjects coming under the ban of the National Board of Censorship.

*The Unwritten Law.*—The censors do not consider the unwritten law a justification for murder.

*Crime.*—A picture with crime in it will not pass (1) when the crime is plainly the main purpose of the picture; when the entire story depends on the crime; or (2) when a crime is repulsive; or (3) when anything is barbarously killed; or (4) when a crime is executed in some unique manner. The reasons for the rejection of the above subjects are so apparent that they need not be amplified.

*Suicide.*—One of the most vital aims of the Board is to eliminate all suggestion of self-destruction; they will not pass a picture in which suicide is a feature.

*Burglary.*—A scene of burglary may be introduced successfully, provided there is no actual theft portrayed, no demonstration of the act. The burglar may be shown entering a house, but he must not be shown in the act of "breaking in." He may be shown with his back to the audience rifling a safe, but he should not be seen opening the safe by any of the methods known only to burglars.

*Vulgarity and Suggestion.*—Your play should not contain any vulgar or suggestive action. Eliminate all questionable flirtations and everything verging on "rough-house."

*Mischief.*—Avoid actions that tend to suggest mischief to youthful people. For instance, no one in your script should play a joke on an invalid or a cripple. Neither should property or valuables be destroyed simply to perpetrate a joke on someone.

*Lynching.*—The only time a lynching is permissible in a picture is when the lynching occurred in the days when it was commonly practiced—in the days of the early West.



*Deadly Weapons.*—Guns, knives and deadly weapons are not objectionable when they portray historical incidents. Otherwise they are taboo.

*Immorality.*—Immorality is not tolerated unless skillfully handled. Remember audiences are often composed quite largely of children.

*Kidnapping.*—Objectionable in some localities.

The above is not an absolutely complete list of objectionable subjects, owing to the fact that new things seem to be arising all the time. The important thing for the new writer to bear in mind is that many of the things listed above are not absolutely barred from pictures. A great many films are produced using crime scenes, for instance; but the author was able to handle them in a proper manner, and probably the crimes were *essential* to the story and not the *purpose* of it. In other words, crime and even immorality may be introduced in a play if it is properly handled. In many cases it becomes *necessary* in order to teach a lesson.

There are many things produced on the legitimate stage which would not be tolerated in the photoplay. This is because a large proportion of the people attending motion picture theatres are children or impressionable adults. Therefore the photoplay has a standard of its own.

Do not confuse sincerity with suggestion. Pictures have been made in which women have quite properly appeared in the nude, or practically so; but such action was necessary to produce the picture and was masterfully handled, so cleverly, in fact, that no one could take offense. On the other hand, a woman might *unnecessarily* reveal more of her ankle than is customary and make the scene objectionable—suggestive. As George Ade said about courting a haughty lady, "It has to be done in a certain way."

One type of unpleasant drama is that showing scenes of drinking and debauchery, wherein some character becomes badly intoxicated, slinks home to his sickly wife, beats her, then, after performing all manner of vile acts, suddenly braces up and reforms!

The only time that murder should be shown, and that very delicately, is either in a detective drama or else in good tragedy, where the removal of some character is essential to the plot. All of Shakespeare's tragedies *deal* with crime, but they do not *exploit* it, and never revel in the harrowing details to produce a thrill.

The producers themselves are often responsible for much of the objectionable appearing on the screen. In many cases, and especially in comedies, they introduce questionable elements to gratify a known demand on the part of certain elements of the public. If you are not going to limit the possibilities of selling your work, however, you had better eliminate all objectionable features in your plot.

As a rule, no matter what you write about, the sale of your play depends largely on the way in which you handle your subject. If you are not careful, many otherwise harmless incidents may become undesirable. For instance, an elopement is not generally considered objectionable in a photoplay; in fact, the audience is quite apt to sympathize with the lovers when the girl's father refuses to allow them to marry. But, if the boy is shown in certain scenes wasting his time, or fre-

quenting saloons, or doing any one of perhaps a hundred similar things, the audience is quite likely to think the father is a good judge of character and give him all their sympathy. Should an elopement then occur, it would prove objectionable.

Censors realize, as well as anyone, that morality is to be desired; and, to this end, crime or suggestion of crime, will be permitted if it teaches a lesson. But crime for crime's sake is condemned.

Many young authors somehow have the idea that, in order to make their plays worth while, there must be a violent or tragic death scene. But the truth is that there are thousands of intensely interesting pictures in which there is not the slightest suggestion of death. In fact, a play without this depressing element is quite apt to be far superior to one containing it. It is a positive fact that editors return hundreds of otherwise good manuscripts in which there are suicides, murders and deaths, simply because they are too depressing to be produced.

#### *Depressing Subjects.*

This leads to a more detailed consideration of depressing subjects.

People go to the movies to be entertained, to forget their troubles, to live for a few brief hours the life of their dreams, to be the hero or the heroine they unconsciously want to be in their own mind. So it becomes highly desirable to eliminate all depressing elements from your plays.

As previously stated, death should be avoided as much as possible; yet it is not entirely out of place if it is absolutely necessary to the logical culmination of your plot. Too many stories, however, contain unnecessary death scenes. For this reason the author is cautioned. Do not imagine, however, that people go to see photoplays merely to laugh or to be amused. "They come to weep as well as laugh." But the thing to remember is that very often a scene showing the *saving* of a life is far more welcome than one depicting death. Even though a character is detestable, it is not desirable to show his death, if otherwise the plot can proceed. We often feel that some characters are so obnoxious that it would be a good thing if they would die, but there is another side to the question—the good-for-evil side. Wouldn't it be better to show a change of heart on the part of an evil character as a solution, than to exterminate him?

A distinction should be made between gloomy pictures and those which simply introduce elements of sadness. Remember what the poet said about "a tear in the eye and a smile on the lips."

#### *Offensive Plays.*

Do not offend anyone's religious or political faiths. People do not object to being "talked to" in a mild or perhaps entertaining way, but they don't want to have their feelings hurt. A gambler will watch a picture portray the evil result of his folly and not object to it; in fact, he may be benefitted by it. He may be glad he saw it, and resolve to change his ways. But a man does not enjoy being ridiculed or abused because of his religious or political faiths.

There have been a number of pictures released which have caused a world of strife among various religious denominations and even in the moving picture industry itself. Producers, therefore, are on their guard, and will not use any kind of play indulging in sectarian squab-



bles. If the beginner wishes to retain the good will of the producer, he had better avoid anything likely to offend religious beliefs. Leave religion to the churches; it has no place in the "movies."

Moving picture theatres are patronized by all classes of people. Therefore, exhibitors must be careful what they run. They must not "step on anyone's feet."

You should be careful not to offend anyone's political faiths, but you do not have to avoid writing about politics. A good story could be written around the suffrage question; although this topic is one which usually proves objectionable to producers, yet it could be handled in an unobjectionable manner. A play could be acceptable, too, if it dealt with socialism, provided it were not written for socialism's sake. In other words, if you write about a political theme, politics should not predominate. Heart interest should be the all-engrossing element. This is equivalent to saying that the new writer will do well not to write about politics.

Do not "knock" anybody or anything in your plays, no matter how strong the desire.

Do not offend good taste. If your play is likely to prove distasteful to a single person, don't write it. Plays antagonistic to the better elements in people never should be written.

Do not hold any race up to ridicule. It is permissible to make light humor of certain racial characteristics; but, if you do this, you must be careful to make the audience laugh *with* the characters and not *at* them.

Do not write plays dealing with certain sections of the country, or the peculiarities of locality. Be broad in choosing your themes. Your work should deal with the problems of humanity in general, without reproach for any race, color or religion.

#### *Hackneyed Themes.*

Always avoid the obvious. There are a number of subjects about which all new writers somehow want to write. If you could review the hundreds of manuscripts sent to any editorial office, you would be surprised at the great number who write about the same old hackneyed plots. At first one wonders why this is. But the reason is simple. The beginner is quite apt to follow the line of least resistance, and naturally write about a worn-out subject. It is easier than to contrive a new one.

In casting about for a theme or plot, many writers lazily grasp the first thing they come to, without trying to locate something with originality. They develop their plot in the same slothful manner. The result is a photoplay almost exactly like hundreds of others received by every studio every day. It is hopelessly unsalable.

There is a general list of subjects not wanted by any editor unless they are treated in an exceptionally new way; even then it is doubtful whether they would sell. Of course, there is no arbitrary list; but it is safe to say that any manuscript based on the following subjects will not find a ready sale unless the author is clever enough to write the plot in a strikingly original manner. Obviously, therefore, the best thing for the beginner to do is to shun a plot based on any of the following subjects:

(1) The stolen child, kidnapped by gypsies usually, and finally restored to its parents by means of a locket, birthmark, or some equally foolish means.

(2) The child who prevents the parents from separating, or reunites them after separation. These plays are generally called, "A Little Child Shall Lead Them."

(3) Two men in love with one girl. She gives them a common task to perform; one tries to win by crooked methods and is discovered. She marries the other. (Note—Two men in love with the same girl creates a hackneyed situation, but does not necessarily mean a hackneyed photoplay. Many excellent productions have been built around this theme. And is safe to say that hundreds, even thousands, of other excellent manuscripts will be written around the same theme. But they will be treated in an entirely original manner by their authors, and the only thing hackneyed about them will be the eternal triangle situation.)

(4) Plays in which a rich child, usually a cripple, is contrasted with a poor child, usually strong and healthy.

(5) The husband jealous of one of his wife's relatives, generally a brother who has been in South America since early youth.

(6) The discharged workman who sets out to injure his former employer, but who, instead, performs some heroic task, thus regaining his old job.

(7) The couple who fall in love, only to find that they are brother and sister, parted early in life.

(8) The unapproved marriage finally made acceptable by a child.

(9) A mischievous little boy.

(10) All stories requiring trick photography.

(11) All stories based on peculiar "influences," or other uncommon sources.

(12) The burglar who enters a house and is prevented from stealing by a child, sometimes even his own, adopted by the family. This type of play usually ends with a rapid-fire reformation, very unconvincing, to say the least.

(13) The escaped convict, who steals another man's clothes and gets the other party "in bad."

(14) The hero who assumes another's crime because he loves the heroine.

(15) Do not under any circumstances build a play around a pair of baby shoes.

(16) Stories built on well-known criminal cases.

(17) The poor lonesome character, usually friendless, moneyless, homeless—and, I almost said, brainless—at Christmas or Thanksgiving.

(18) The hard-working young man, who finally gains an interest in "the business" and wins the "hand" of the employer's daughter. The opposition in such a play generally is the foreman or a scheming partner.

(19) The hero, having a duty to perform, generally an arrest to make, who falls in love with the evil one's daughter, and—this is the "crool" thing—has to choose between love and duty. Why, there's



the title! "Love and Duty." These plays are turned out by the million.

This isn't the end of the list by any means. One could go on listing hackneyed subjects almost indefinitely. Most beginners seem to take a keen delight in writing about them. Nothing could make the rejection of their work more certain. But it is a waste of time to give more examples, for the list above is sufficient to give the earnest writer a clear idea of the type of manuscript not wanted, under ordinary treatment.

Some beginners will wonder how they are to avoid hackneyed subjects. The first thing to do is use common sense. The next best antidote is a never-ending study of the screen. The rejection slips you receive are often good indicators, too. An extensive reading of books and periodicals will also greatly help you. But the capable and friendly critic is perhaps the best person in the world to keep you from wasting time and money on impossible subjects. He makes a study of the market and of all the plays produced; he instantly knows whether a plot is available. If your play comes back, and you don't know why, send it to a critic and find out.

A number of stories and plays have been produced in which some of the above themes listed as hackneyed have been used in some form or other. Take the mischievous boy for example. Who wouldn't like to see Booth Tarkington's "Penrod" come to life on the screen! Naturally the beginner wonders why such a play would be acceptable. The reason is simple. A clever writer is often able to take an impossible theme and do wonderful things with it. He disguises it, so to speak. But this is work for experienced pens.

#### *In General.*

Beginners frequently make the mistake of attempting extremely long and exhaustive subjects before they have succeeded with short plays. Many new writers want to begin their career with an "Intolerance" or a serial of twenty episodes and forty reels, generally on the order of one of the "perils" or "masked figure" pictures so well known to playgoers.

Spectacles like "Intolerance" are subjects which have been turning over in the author's mind for years. Usually the author writes and directs his own manuscript. He spends perhaps from two to four years producing it. It is hardly necessary to say, then, that this is not a subject for the beginner. The new writer will do well to confine his writing to five- or six-reel dramas and one- and two-reel comedies.

Avoid dream stories—improbable plays finally explained by saying that it was all a dream. True, more or less plays are constantly being produced with this explanation, but the average producer will not be apt to purchase them from new writers.

There is practically no demand for Bible stories. Occasionally, a story is produced from a Biblical subject; but the work is usually done by a company specially organized for the production. If you attempt to write Bible plays, you are doomed to failure before you start.

Allegorical stories and labor problem plays are not wanted. Sex stories are rapidly going into the discard, even though now and then one is produced in a sensational way. Drug and liquor plays are

rapidly disappearing. In truth, the ever-increasing aim of producers and exhibitors is to get away from all unclean, unwholesome, and unhappy subjects. There are so many bright things in the world that the unclean ought to be strictly avoided. People, too, have so many vexations in their own lives that they do not care to witness trouble in their entertainment. In this connection, remember again the happy ending. Many lives end in lost hope, broken faith, and shattered love; but producers are striving more and more to get away from these things, so the new writer will do well to gratify their desires and give them the happy ending.

Many an otherwise salable photoplay has been rejected because its plot contained a glaring inconsistency unknown to the author. This does not mean that little inconsistencies in a photoplay necessarily cause rejection. It is only when the inconsistency is an actual element or important situation in the plot that it is rejected.

Mr. Herbert Hoagland gives an excellent example of the inconsistent situation in his book, "How To Write A Photoplay." He says:

"In a Civil War story the scenario called for a field hospital with the Red Cross flag flying from a staff. Well, the Red Cross wasn't organized until the closing year of the war, and then it was done in Switzerland. The Southerners and the Yankees never saw this emblem of mercy *during the whole four years of strife.*"

This example should be sufficient to keep the new writer constantly on his guard against introducing such grossly inconsistent situations in any of his manuscripts.



## CHAPTER XII

### WRITING COMEDY

In the photoplay world, there are few fine distinctions between the different types of manuscripts. Plays are loosely classified as "dramas" or "comedies," depending on whether they are inclined to be serious or merely funny. There are, however, several distinct types of comedy subjects.

#### *Various Types of Humorous Plays.*

There are four distinct types of comedy subjects: Extravaganza, burlesque, farce, comedy.

Extravaganza usually treats of unnatural and impossible situations. The superhuman activities of a character, or set of characters, usually supply the plot. There is not much need to detail this type, for the writing of it should not be attempted by the beginner.

Burlesque generally treats of a serious, and, perhaps, well-known subject, in an absurd, incongruous manner. Fox recently produced a burlesque of "Julius Caesar," in which the main characters were given funny names similar to Shakespeare's characters. They went through the regular action of "Julius Caesar" in an uproarious manner, quoting famous passages of Shakespeare's in a twisted, humorous style.

Farce goes to extremes, dealing with the ridiculous, but not with physical impossibilities. Though farce need not necessarily be probable, still it should be put on a plausible basis and worked out as though probable.

Comedy is generally a more refined type of humor than farce. Strictly speaking, it deals with humorous situations of every-day life—situations which may happen to the average individual. There is nothing extravagant, unnatural or superhuman about comedy. It must be absolutely probable. Herein lies its value; its humor is real. Of course, humor may be carried to the extreme in comedies; but it should not be made incredulous.

#### *Why Comedy is a Difficult Art.*

Producers often announce that they are overstocked with certain types of dramatic subjects, such as western stories, or war stories, but it is a rare thing indeed to hear one say that he is overstocked with comedies. This is because comedy is a difficult art. The easiest thing for a writer to do is to appeal to the emotions. The next most difficult subjects are those appealing to the intellect. But by far the most difficult thing to do is to make an audience laugh.

Comedy writing is becoming more difficult each year. Producers no longer will even consider a manuscript consisting of a string of disconnected incidents. Comedy now-a-days must contain a well laid out plot as a basis for the humor, and must be constructed exactly the same as dramatic plays. The incidents going to make up the plot cannot be grabbed from mid-air; there must be a reason for them. It

is often laughable to give a character a ducking in a fountain, but there must be a reason for doing it.

Furthermore, the old, old trick of having characters "throw things"—generally soft pies or other mushy articles—at each other is rather obsolete, to say the least. This outrage is still perpetrated in some comedies, but is rapidly passing into the discard. It is becoming constantly more difficult for the new writer to sell work in which such action is incorporated. All this goes to show that comedy writing is a truly difficult art and is becoming more exact as time passes.

*How To Write Comedy.*

Comedy must be treated in a "full" manner. There must be about twice as many scenes in a comedy as in a dramatic photoplay. This is due to the fact that the scenes are short, as a rule, and the action progresses more rapidly. This is one reason why comedy is difficult to write; not because it takes more time; not because the labor utilized in the mechanical preparation is extensive; but because a writer must put considerable brain work to the task of writing a plot containing twice the ordinary amount of action.

In comedies, every scene must create a laugh. It is not possible to use a set of scenes having no particular comic value. This might be done in a dramatic subject but would not be tolerated in comedy. Unfortunately, however, humor does not enter into many of the scenes in present-day comedies. Many producers have been guilty of stretching a few good ideas over several reels, but this only goes to show how really scarce good comedy is, and how editors are pressed for good subjects.

A play is not a comedy simply because it contains a number of lively scenes. Many scenes are used in comedy because the action is rapid; but if the action is slow, there is no excuse for the many scenes.

In your endeavor to make your treatment of comedy subjects "full," do not use words uselessly and indulge in unnecessary talk. Do not be verbose; do not go into tiresome details. Be just as brief as you would be in writing a dramatic play.

In the early days of photoplay writing, comedy subjects consisted of split-reels; that is, it took two or more short comedy plays to make one reel of film. These brief, would-be comedies have gone into the discard; it is practically impossible these days to find a comedy less than one reel in length—requiring about twelve or fifteen minutes for exhibition on the screen—consuming about a thousand feet of film. So it is useless for the new writer to attempt comedy of less than one reel. Two is the usual length; but very few comedy subjects take up more than this number.

The first thing for the writer to decide, then, is whether his play should be one or two reels. If there is any doubt in his mind he should make it one reel. Don't attempt to "pad" a comedy. If you do, it will surely drag. Better eliminate a few situations, and confine your plot to one reel, than try to pad it into two.

Because comedies are short it does not follow that they sell for comparatively smaller sums. Comedies are so scarce that, even though short, they bring just as much a five- and six-reel dramatic plays. It is quality more than quantity that counts.



*Requirements of Comedy.*

Comedies of society life and comedies of every-day life are always in demand. Unusual stress is placed upon domestic scenes. The comedy writer should always remember that comedies of action are far more valuable than comedies of ideas. It is not sufficient to lead the characters up to a funny climax; all of the action leading to the climax must be laughable. Of course, there should be a humorous idea back of your comedy; the main theme must be facetious in itself; but all the time you are leading up to the climax, you must introduce humorous situations.

It is a difficult matter to write a comedy of ideas. This may easily be done on the theatrical stage; here the characters are permitted the constant use of smile-provoking dialogue. But in the photoplay, the laughs must arise from funny action alone, with the use of a very few words. Take the Chaplin comedies, for instance; there are few or no sub-titles in them; their success depends almost entirely on the ludicrous adventures of Mr. Chaplin and his associates.

Each scene in a comedy should have its own individual comedy action; and that action should relate specifically to the plot—and should help in advancing the plot to its logical climax. So if any scenes in your comedy are not funny, inject humor into them; but do not try to force the comedy, and, in so doing, introduce situations having no bearing on your plot.

*General Advice.*

Practically every successful comedy produced has a worth while plot at the bottom. This plot may be somewhat hidden by the comedy incidents going to make up the main situation; but it is there just the same, and all of the funny incidents introduced into the script have some direct bearing on that plot. If they didn't, they would cease, in a large measure, to be funny.

If you start to write a farce, do not switch off to comedy-drama in part of your manuscript. Many amateur manuscripts contain a little of all the different types of comedies. Emotional dramas generally contain comedy elements as relief for the serious, but it is poor comedy indeed that contains tragedy.

Many comedy writers tend to introduce questionable elements in their plays. They forget that, if a joke offends good taste, it ceases to be funny. Also, if comedy is to be appreciated, it must be jovial. The new writer is likely to introduce national types in comedy; extravagant Frenchmen or red-whiskered Irishmen; but he quickly finds this type of play has long gone out of fashion. The successful type of comedy to-day does not treat of any particular class of people. The main comedians are generally ordinary Americans of no particular type. Some of them may act somewhat like farmers, but they are not pure farm types. In other words, racial and sectional characteristics are not wanted.

Clean comedy is the thing in demand. In some comedies are introduced elements which would not be tolerated by the Censors in regular drama. But incidents of this kind are becoming rarer all the time, and the clean comedy of situation is rapidly coming into its own.

A few years ago, almost any sort of coarse, suggestive, even vulgar,

situations would get a laugh. The character of playgoers is changing, however. This type of picture, therefore, is rapidly passing. It has been the policy of some producers to build quite elaborate comedies around married life. Many of these have been questionable. Infidelity should be left out of all comedies. It may be a fit subject for the legitimate stage, but not for the movies, which are patronized by young and old. Always remember not to introduce anything in your comedies likely to prove objectionable to, or be improper for, any member of the audience to view.

The author has read hundreds of so-called comedies, in which the main character was described at length. This character is generally called Charlie. This shows that the writer had some particular actor in mind. In these manuscripts, Charlie runs into perhaps half a hundred people, who are brought into the story for a short time and then dropped. There really is no plot back of it all; contributory factions are entirely lacking, and the events are not at all connected. They are merely a series of more or less funny and disconnected situations. Such manuscripts are absolutely worthless.

The recoil is useful in comedies. A character goes to great pains to prepare what might be called a "trap" for some other character, and then falls into it himself. An example of this is the old "saw" so often used in present-day comedies; a character prepares a bomb for an enemy, only to find, as the action of the play progresses, that it comes back to him in some way or other just at the time it is about to explode. The humorous situations resulting in the passing of the bomb back and forth can readily be imagined. This bomb "gag" not only is an example of the recoil, but it has been used cleverly to produce suspense. The suspense created by the uncertainty as to just when the bomb will explode is immense.

In writing the synopsis of your comedy, do not attempt to be funny in telling it. A comedy synopsis should be related in a crisp, clear, business-like manner without resorting to jokes or puns in the telling. The editor wants to know if the *action* of your plot is funny, not your way of telling it.

Comedy action should progress smoothly like a well-oiled machine. Each scene should glide easily to the next, without a hitch or a halt, constantly approaching the major climax, exactly as in drama.



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PART III  
A MODEL PHOTOPLAY

“ The Countess Charming ”

By Gelett Burgess and Carolyn Wells  
Scenario by Gardner Hunting  
Directed by Donald Crisp

FEATURING JULIAN ELTINGE

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IMPORTANT--The Model Photoplay appearing on the following pages is reprinted by the courtesy of the Famous Players-Laskey Corporation. It is the actual working scenario from which the Paramount Picture “The Countess Charming” was produced.

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## CHAPTER I

### "THE COUNTESS CHARMING"

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IMPORTANT—*The scenario for "The Countess Charming," printed below, was written by Mr. Gardner Hunting, considered one of the greatest scenario writers in America, from the story by Gelett Burgess and Carolyn Wells. Mr. Julian Eltinge, well-known female impersonator, was featured in this play under the direction of Donald Crisp. Since this is the actual working scenario used by the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation to produce the Paramount Picture, "The Countess Charming," its value to the beginner is too obvious for comment. We take this opportunity to acknowledge our deep debt to the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, by whose kind permission this scenario is printed below.*

THE PUBLISHERS.

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### " THE COUNTESS CHARMING "

- |    |                   |  |
|----|-------------------|--|
| 1. | Main Title:       | Countess Charming.   |
| 2. | Producer's Title: |  |
| 3. | Credit Title:     |  |
| 4. | Subtitle:         | "To every cause its craft—whether to win<br>a war or to woo a woman!"      |
| 5. | Subtitle:         | Members of the North Shore Country Club<br>Hear a Plea for Red Cross Funds |

#### Scene 1.

Int. Club Lounge—(or large general reception and dancing room, characteristic of country clubs) (IRIS IN)

Semi-informal but considerable gathering of society folk (some in sports clothes, some in afternoon costumes) listening to closing words of an earnest plea for subscriptions made by a good type of Red Cross woman worker—she says:

- |    |               |  |
|----|---------------|--|
| 6. | Spoken Title: | "Dear friends, the world has spent billions<br>to spread ruin; shall we not spend something<br>to staunch a little of the flowing blood, to<br>repair a few of the human wrecks, to relieve<br>some of the suffering?" |
|----|---------------|--|

Worker making closing remarks.

- |    |           |   |
|----|-----------|---|
| 7. | Subtitle: | A Listener, Youthfully Honest and Unspoiled<br>Enough to be Touched<br>"Betty Lovering ..... (Miss Vidor) |
|----|-----------|---|

#### Scene 2.

Int. Club Lounge—(CLOSE-UP)

Betty leaning forward—earnest-eyed—lips parted—listening eagerly and absorbedly.

8. Subtitle: Her Mother, to Whom the Social Drift of the Moment is Law.

## Scene 3.

Int. Club Lounge—(CLOSE-UP)

Mrs. Lovering (rather handsome, but somewhat characterless, society matron) who listens a little restlessly—glances off once or twice to see what her neighbors are doing.

9. Subtitle: A Guest, Lately Introduced at the Club, Too Interesting a Figure to Escape Gossip  
Mr. Saunders Julian ..(JULIAN ELTINGE)

## Scene 4.

Int. Club Lounge—(CLOSE-UP)

Julian listens gravely to speaker, then turns quietly, looks off at Betty with quiet admiration and subtle smile of pleasure in her beauty and girlish earnestness.

## Scene 5.

Int. Club Lounge—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Betty and Julian. He looks at her—she becomes conscious of his gaze, turns toward him, a little embarrassed by the sudden contact of eyes—hers droop prettily—his gaze plainly suggests beginning of love, while her slight confusion readily hints that she is not indifferent to him—she drops her eyes—as she does so, she notices his hand on chair arm.

## Scene 6.

Int. Club Lounge—(CLOSE-UP)

Julian's hand—striking ring upon it.

## Scene 7.

Int. Club Lounge—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Betty looks at ring—then glances up at Julian—then turns to listen again to speaker.

## Scene 8.

Int. Club Lounge—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Matron (calculating, restlessly ambitious type) sitting with three only moderately attractive, marriageable daughters and a friend—matron looks off at Betty and Julian—then glances significantly over her own unsought brood—after instant, looks again at Lovering group, whispers to her friends:

10. Spoken Title: "After the Loverings have landed that young Mr. Julian, I suppose they'll investigate the mystery surrounding him."

Matron finishes speaking.

## Scene 9.

Int. Club Lounge—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Matron and companion. Her companion raises brows, looks off with gossip's interest, inquires as to Julian's reputed connections—matron replies:

11. Spoken Title: "He's said to have been in diplomatic service—but no one seems able to state in what capacity."

Matron obviously jealous of the Loverings—slightly tilts head and turns toward Red Cross speaker—companion glances at her, then at her three daughters, smiles knowingly to self—abruptly turns—all the group begins to applaud with that patronizing, indulgent geniality society audiences display on such occasions.

## Scene 10.

Int. Club Loungs

Speaker has just finished—audience applauding—several ladies surround speaker—audience begins to break up into groups.

## Scene 11.

Int. Club Lounge—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Betty springs up and begins to talk eagerly to Julian of address—he rises, to listen smilingly—Mrs. Lovering hovers beside them, but glances fleetingly



about—presently becomes all smiles with suggestion of sycophantic greeting, as if important personages approach her.

12. Subtitle: The Social Dictator, Who Leads the Smart Set—As if by a Ring in its Collective Nose!  
Mrs. Esmond Vandergrift .....

Scene 12.

Int. Club Lounge—(CLOSE-UP)

Mrs. Vandergrift advances, smiling patronizingly, as if it is her whim to be gracious for the moment to Mrs. Lovering—(she is overdressed, much jewelled with rings, gemmed chains, ear-rings, etc.)

13. Subtitle: And Husband—Who is Only the President of the Biscuit Trust, the Board of Trade and a Bank or Two.

Scene 13.

Int. Club Lounge—(CLOSE-UP)

Vandergrift chewing dry cigar—absently feeling for a match—(heavy type of big financier, who is spoiled by success and thinks his opinion should guide the world)—he frowning and smirking contemptuously, as if disgusted with what he has been listening to.

Scene 14.

Int. Club Lounge—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Vandergrifts greet Mrs. Lovering, who flatters with eagerness to please—speaks quickly to Betty, who turns with Julian to speak to Vandergrifts—Betty eagerly says some enthusiastic thing about address—Mrs. Van looks at her, coolly raising brows—Vandergrift sneers, looks from Betty to Julian, as if expects to find sympathy from a man—says:

14. Spoken Title: "It exasperates me—this everlasting, soliciting, begging—grafting! They get no money of mine!"

He sneers contemptuously—Mrs. Van nods with disgusted approval—Van finds match, begins to light cigar without consideration for ladies—Julian takes exception to what he has said, with quick gravity, says:

15. Spoken Title: "I resent such sneers, sir, at great-hearted workers for a wonderful cause!"

Julian very cool, but resentful—Vandergrift genuinely astonished, but growing furiously angry at so public a rebuke—glances about, as if conscious of audience—says:

16. Spoken Title: "You're very ready to tell people with money how to give it away! What axe have YOU to grind here?"

Julian starts at insult, then coldly angry—answers:

17. Spoken Title: "Some day, Mr. Vandergrift, the government will largely confiscate such swollen fortunes as yours, and apply them to real human needs. I hope to God it may be soon!"

Scene 15.

Int. Club Lounge—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Julian faces Vandergrift, as others listen—club members crowd forward curiously—Vandergrift almost foaming at mouth—at a loss for a reply—Mrs. Van steps toward Julian—with eyes blazing with contempt, says:

18. Spoken Title: "Yes, doubtless you would like the Lord to help you help yourself!"

Julian turns, eyes narrowing—then, realizing that affair is becoming scene and he cannot say rough things to a woman, turns abruptly away, offering arm to Betty, leading her quietly off—she indignant and much stirred, but accepts his hint, goes quietly—the Vans turn to look angrily at each other—Mrs. Lovering apologetic—people curious and gossipy.

Scene 16.

Red Cross worker and others come to Betty—Julian in f. g. moves forward to stand at her shoulder—worker distressed, embarrassed, humiliated, almost in tears—Betty impulsively sympathetic, and resentful toward the Vans—takes worker's hands, speaks quickly—Julian reaches over, takes sub-



scription book from worker—opening it, takes out fountain pen—starts to write.

Int. Club Lounge—(CLOSE-UP subscription book)

Julian's hand, with handsome pen, is writing pledge

Saunders Julian .....\$1,000.

#### Scene 18.

Int. Club Lounge—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Julian smiles, as Betty eagerly seizes and looks at book—she delighted with his action, shows book to worker, who is quickly grateful, as much for his moral support as for his gift to cause suddenly, impulsive Betty looks up and about, then at Red Cross worker—considers an instant over new idea—then says:

19. Spoken Title: "I know the other club members will give. I'll get their contributions!"

Red Cross worker doubtful for instant—Betty eagerly urges and promises—few of people about smile with reserved approval—one woman listens with half-sneer—Betty insists on helping—Julian nods, pleased with her—worker at last consents, thanks Betty, then turns away with friends, as if glad to escape the club—sneering woman turns quickly away—Betty turns to Julian, somewhat excitedly says means to make club members give.

#### Scene 18½.

Ext. Club (piazza or terrace)

Vandergrifts just coming out, surrounded by group of toadies, among whom is Mrs. Lovering—Van fuming—Mrs. Van grim—others take cue slavishly from society leader, look off, as if with settled hostility to subscription plan—woman who sneered at Julian and Betty comes up to Van, tells him of Julian's subscription—Van looks angrily off, says:

20. Spoken Title: Subscribed a thousand, did he? Well, he'll—bear watching! There's always something back of such showy generosity."

Vandergrift sneers at Julian, off—then, as club servant brings his hat and Mrs. Van's wrap (or sunshade) she takes his arm with managing gesture, as if saying, "Now let ME manage this affair—I'll take care of this Mr. Julian!"—they go—group gossiping behind them with interest, as they foresee that something will happen. (IRIS OUT)

#### Scene 19.

Int. Club Lounge—(IRIS IN)

Julian coming wandering slowly in, thoughtfully lighting cigar—group of men at buffet glance at him, then at each other—turn, subtly shutting him out of group—he sees, but feigns not to notice, looks up and off—smiles as some one he likes approaches.

21. Subtitle: Julian's Friend and Sponsor at the Club—the Only Man of Whom He Makes an Intimate.  
Dr. John Cavendish .....

Cavendish comes up, looks quizzically at Julian—they glance at group of men in b. g. turn to f. g. to talk—Cavendish says:

22. Spoken Title: "Well, you've probably queered the Red Cross—if not yourself—with the women here. Few will dare back anything the Vandergrifts disapprove!"

Julian grins slightly, produces cigar, holds it out to Cavendish, as if it is much more important consideration than the social situation—Cavendish looks off toward Betty, says: "But it may have serious consequences for your friends!"—Julian quickly serious.

#### Scene 20.

Int. Club Lounge—(Shooting into piazza)

To show Julian and Cavendish approaching door, as Cavendish describes the probable consequences of offending the Vandergrifts—Julian disturbed now, begins to look about for glimpse of Betty, feels responsibility—after moment, excuses self to Cavendish to hunt for Betty—goes—Cavendish looks after him, subtly smiling with hearty liking.

## Scene 21.

Ext. Club Piazza

Betty asks group for contributions—finds her plea falls on cold ears—stops—modish woman draws girl to f. g. with manner of giving friendly tip—says to wondering Betty. "Betty drop it, dear—people who value Mrs. Van's good-will won't subscribe now"—dissuading Betty from soliciting—woman goes on talking—just then, Julian comes in, stands a moment, listening—after instant, woman sees him, stops abruptly—Betty looks up—he says:

23. Spoken Title: "I fancy you'd better take her advice, Miss Betty—and leave this situation to me. I'm responsible for it."

Betty protests—Julian takes book firmly from her, says: "Come—let's hear what mother will say"—Betty turns with him.

## Scene 22.

Int. Corner of Club Lounge

Mrs. Lovering talking rather anxiously with couple of social cronies—Betty and Julian come in—Betty makes appeal quickly to mother, referring to Julian and subscription-book, etc.—Mrs. Lovering turns on Betty at once, condemning her having anything to do with subscription—Julian, with half-incredulous, half-protesting smile, tries to argue—Mrs. Lovering begins to scold him—Julian annoyed, but polite—Mrs. Lovering urges Betty to go home now—Betty says:

24. Spoken Title: "But mother, I've promised to get subscriptions from the club members!"

Mrs. Lovering disgusted, but insists she give it up and come home—Julian quietly smiles at Betty—approves mother's plan—Betty distressed, yields—trio all turn to go. (IRIS OUT)

## Scene 23.

Ext. Park at Vandergrift's Home—(IRIS IN)

As Motor arrives with the Vans—Vandergrift talks with spasmodic recurrence of wrath over affront from Julian—as they alight and come to the f. g. on way on—Mrs. Van stops him—says:

25. Spoken Title: "A house party at our ocean-side house, which includes Mr. Julian's friends but not himself, will stop his social career here!"

Van begins to grin, as sees nature of this punishment—Mrs. Van turns with evident purpose of putting her plan at once into execution—leads way into house.

## Scene 24.

Ext. Front of Lovering House

Motor just arrived with Loverings and Julian—all rather silent—Betty very unhappy—as they alight, Julian says quiet, dignified word of regret to Mrs. Lovering—she almost snaps at him—Betty protests in distress—Mrs. Lovering takes her arm, draws her away, leaving Julian unceremoniously—Betty looks back, but mother urges her on in—Julian takes off his hat, stands looking very regretfully after them, then raises brows—turns away.

## Scene 25.

Int. Corner of Lovering Hall (flat will do, with table and phone)

Betty and mother in—Mrs. Lovering scolds, points to phone—"You call up Mrs. Vandergrift this moment, young lady, and apologize for the offence of your escort, who will probably not have the grace to apologize for himself"—Betty protests—mother obdurate—Betty sinks down at table, calls number.

## Scene 26.

Int. Corner of Mrs. Van's Morning Room—(small corner, with desk and phone near window)

Mrs. Van seated with social secretary—dictating—phone rings—secretary answers, tells Mrs. Van who it is—Mrs. Van smiles grimly, takes phone, answers graciously, then listens—after moment, says:

- Spoken Title: "Why, of course you're sorry, my dear. But naturally we shall all have to—ah—drop Mr.—ah—Julian!"

Mrs. Van smiles, nods, then hangs up with grim satisfaction.



## Scene 27.

Int. Corner of Lovering Hall

Betty hangs up, wilts, then turns in distress to mother, says: "She says 'of course we'll have to drop him'." Mother compresses lips with instant resolve—Betty sees, protests—mother firmly says she will not offend Mrs. Van, turns away, as if to take action—Betty, after instant aghast, whirls, runs away, crying.. (IRIS OUT)

27. Subtitle: That Night—First Blood!

## Scene 28.

Int. Julian's Library—(fine set)—Night—(IRIS IN)

Julian on smoking pipe—thinking gravely, in big easy chair—Jap servant comes in with note, which he indicates just came by messenger—Julian surprised, takes note—reads:

28. Subtitle: A Confidential Servant, of Deep Discretion and High Efficiency—Soto.....

Soto looks up gravely past camera, then at master, who is finishing reading note with distress written all over his countenance—at last, compressing lips, Julian turns again to first page of note—re-reads:

29. Insert: (First page of note—delicate, feminine hand, on monogrammed paper.)

Mr. Julian:

I regret to take this step, but, in view of what happened today, I feel constrained to ask you to cease your attentions to my daughter Betty. I have plans for her which

Julian sinks back in chair, lays aside pipe, stares at hearth—Soto asks if there is any answer—Julian slowly shakes head—Soto turns away, hesitatingly—Julian's face twists with bitter emotions.

## Scene 29.

Int. Betty's Boudoir—(simply lace-curtained window in flat—show window only)—Moonlight

Betty (negligee) stands with mother (kimono)—Mrs. Lovering telling Betty what she has done—Betty crying, suddenly pleads with mother—Mrs. Lovering silences her, turns away—Betty buries her face in curtain—sobs.

## Scene 30.

Int. Julian's Library—Night

Julian sits, as before, staring fixedly into fireless grate, at last opens grim mouth—says vigorously, "Oh, Hell!"—kicks stand, looks off, turns to pipe, picks it up, slowly rises to knock ashes from it.

## Scene 31.

Int. Julian's Library—Night—(CLOSE-UP)

Julian—knocks ashes from pipe, begins to fill it from jar on mantel, thinks, shakes head bitterly, very slow and deliberate, packs tobacco down, puts pipe in mouth, suddenly a thought strikes him, he pauses, stands poised, knits brows.

## Scene 32.

Soto stands, peering in thru crack, worried about bad news master received, shakes head, peers again, then stares—

## Scene 33.

Int. Julian's Library—Night—(CLOSE-UP)

Julian, as forgets to light pipe, as stares and thinks, very slowly face changes as idea begins to take possession of him, suddenly at last he brightens, half turns, hesitates, then whirls, calls off: "Soto!"

## Scene 34.

Int. Julian's Library—Night

Julian waiting—Soto comes hurriedly—Julian looks at him with grim grin still considering his idea within self—at last, puts pipe into his mouth—says:

30. Spoken Title: "Soto, if somebody was taking your best girl—away from you—and it wasn't her fault, what would you do?"

Soto grins—Julian regards him earnestly—Soto rubs hands, bows, then grins broadly—says:



31. Spoken Title: "Iss, Mis' Julian. I—fight!"  
 Julian (pipe in mouth) nods grimly—then looks off—at last, beckons to Soto—leads way out.

## Scene 35.

Int. Julian's Bedroom—Night

Julian comes in quickly with Soto and to chest in corner—opens it—looks in—purses lips, speaks jestingly to Soto, who regards him curiously, then grins—Julian stoops, raises handsome gown, holding it up to light, then lays aside pipe on dresser, laughs, turns, and with imitation of feminine manner holds gowns against self, as if to show effect, directs Soto quickly to take something out of box—Soto carefully brings up fine woman's coiffeur (wig-form)

## Scene 36.

Int. Julian's Bedroom—Night—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Julian laughs—says to Soto:

32. Spoken Title: "Soto, I've a notion to indulge in one more—masquerade!"

Soto grins expectantly—Julian laughs, suddenly tosses gown to Soto, starts to get out of his clothes, hustling Soto to get the rest of the necessary paraphernalia for his dressing—they hear bell—Julian nods to Soto to answer it—Soto goes.

## Scene 37.

Int. Corner of Mrs. Vandergrift's Morning Room—Night

Social Secretary at work, addressing invitations, as if she has been already long at the task. Mrs. Van comes in, looks at notes, picks one up, studies it:

33. Insert: (Informal invitation—hand written:)

My Dear Mrs. Loverning:

Won't you and Betty join us on the fifteenth at Billowcrest for the week-end? We shall have a.....

Mrs. Van approves, talks to Secretary about list, noticeably crosses off name—unnecessary to show close-up here, to suggest that the scratched entry in Julian's name).

## Scene 38.

Int. Julian's Library

Soto just showing in Cavendish, who asks easily where Julian is—Soto hesitates, hems and bows, then says will see if his master is in—Cavendish looks at him with curious smirk—Soto goes off scene—Cavendish thinks, laughs, then with air of being privileged person, starts determinedly to follow.

## Scene 39.

Int. Julian's Bedroom—Night

Julian smokes pipe while he lays out gowns, etc.—Soto enters, explains Cavendish is coming—Cavendish strides in, stops short, looks about at gowns, etc.—amazed, then grins, looks around to see where the woman is—then says: "Well, I never thought this of you"—Julian turns, Cavendish half-humorously accuses him of having a woman in his rooms—Julian quite serious—turns—points to chest—says:

34. Spoken Title: "A woman? Yes! Right in that box! The Russian Countess Raffelski—who takes a house here this week for the season!"

Julian finishes title:

## Scene 40.

Int. Julian's Bedroom—Night—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Cavendish stares at Julian, who is grim and determined—at last, Cavendish says, "Well, I'll be damned!" Julian says:

- 35-36. Spoken Title: "There's a chip on my shoulder—for the Vandergrifts—and I've a fair lady's cause to champion!"

Julian lightly laughs—makes quick boxing motion—touches Cavendish's cheek—Cavendish says, "Well, by Jove!" Julian points to Soto—says:

37. Spoken Title: "I have been advised to fight! And this is—my coat of mail!"

Julian picks up pipe again, begins to light it—Cavendish walks slowly forward—Julian takes up wig, begins to talk of plans, with half-serious determination—(IRIS OUT)

38. Subtitle: When Plans Matured.

Scene 41.

Ext. Terrace (or secluded porch) at Betty's House—(IRIS IN)

On Betty and mother just sitting down to breakfast (served outside)—maid brings coffee and fruit, letters and morning paper—Betty sad and gloomy—Mrs. Lovering rallies her a little on her mood—Betty looks off unhappily—Mrs. Lovering opens paper in search of social news—Betty idly looks over letters, suddenly finds one over which she is quickly, but guardedly eager, opens it—reads.

Scene 42.

Ext. Terrace—Betty's House—(CLOSE-UP)

39. Insert: Betty reads, grows suddenly startled, then very unhappy, turns to last page: (Last page of note—bold, strong man's hand:)  
\* \* \* only with deepest regret that I recognize your mother's right to end our acquaintance, and bow to her decision.

Sincerely,

Sanders Julian.

Betty drops hands, with letter, into lap—looks across piteously at mother.

Scene 43.

Ext. Terrace—Betty's House—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Betty and mother at table. Mrs. Lovering discovers social item of huge interest—speaks suddenly to sorrowing Betty, without noticing her grief—begins to read excitedly:

40. Insert: (Double-column newspaper head, in style of social page:)

Distinguished visitor here.

Countess Raffelski, of Petrograd and Paris,  
takes Wells Street House. Will  
stay the season.

Betty, despite sadness, opens eyes a little—mother reads on eagerly, but, after a moment, Betty loses interest, looks down again at her letter, suddenly gets up, goes softly out—Mrs. Lovering absorbed behind newspaper, goes on reading aloud, thinking Betty still listens—after moment, she looks up to see what impression she has created—is astonished to miss Betty, stares around, then newspaper interest is too strong for her other curiosity—she goes on reading.

Scene 44.

Ext. Vandergrift Garden

Mrs. Van picking flowers—(big sun-hat and gloves, as if this is regular hobby)—Secretary comes with letters and paper, points out item regarding Countess, as if it is part of her business to call attention to such items—Mrs. Van reads, with avidity.

Scene 45.

Ext. Vandergrift Garden—(CLOSE-UP)

Mrs. Van reads, turning to light so camera gets flash of item to identify it—face takes on surprise and some chagrin that this is her first news of this event—she suddenly covers feeling from secretary, turns for letters:

Scene 46.

Ext. Vandergrift Garden—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Secretary watching—gives Mrs. Vandergrift selected, open letter—Mrs. Van reads:

41. Insert: (Letter—in same strong man's hand as Julian's letter to Betty, on paper with crest at top:)

My dear Madame Vandergrift:

You will, no doubt, recall our meeting in Moscow. My sister has taken a fancy to stay the summer at \* \* \* \*



Hands turn suddenly to last page of letter,  
as if with sudden desire to find signature)

\* \* \* \* any courtesies you show her.

Cordially,

(Prince) Fedorovitch Kamenski.

Mrs. Van looks at signature, knits brows, can't remember the Prince, then subtly smiles, gratified anyway, turns to Secretary with smile and nod, says will attend to matter after breakfast, turns to gardening—Secretary looks at her with almost veneration as she goes—after moment, Mrs. Van loogs guardedly over sholder after secretary—then pauses, tries to remember Prince Fedorovitch—at last shrugs, smiles—(IRIS OUT)

#### Scene 47.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room—(IRIS IN)

On handsome set, somewhat overfurnished—(one feature is life-size of Venus or Aphrodite, rather boldly nude)—Hold on empty set for moment—then Soto comes slowly in, turns, awaits Countess, who presently follows—she is on inspection tour (in handsome tailored gown, suit, street or traveling costume—very queenly, very charming)—looks about with lorgnette—Dr. Cavendish follows her in, grinning with interest.

#### Scene 48.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess peers about, presently sights statue, eyes widen with amusement—she feigns to be somewhat shocked—turns half away, shielding her eyes with mock modesty—looks at Cavendish, off—shakes head—"My deah doctor! Shocking!" Then suddenly grins, very mannishly pokes Cavendish in ribs, turns to look at other things—(IRIS OUT)

42. Subtitle:

The Presentation.

#### Scene 49.

Ext. Club Lawn—(IRIS IN)

On gay scene, club folk in considerable numbers and festive array—tennis in background—golf in distance—Vandergrifts just arriving—being greeted by eager and interested friends—all women mildly excited over anticipated meeting of Countess.

#### Scene 50.

Ext. Club Lawn—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Mrs. Vandergrift talks with friends—Van, bored with society thing, gets out cigar, turns to old bird of his sort—the two go for smoke—women inquire eagerly of Mrs. Vandergrift regarding Countess—Mrs. Van says:

43. Spoken Title:

"Oh, yes, the Countess' brother, Prince Kamenski, wrote me that she was coming. I called yesterday—but missed her"

Mrs. Van speaks with very nonchalant air of assurance—goes on talking.

#### Scene 51.

Ext. Club Porch

Betty and Mother arriving—Mrs. Lovering eager, interested—looks all about for important folk—Betty forlorn and unhappy—glances about surreptitiously in hope of seeing Julian—Mrs. Lovering sees group on lawn—urges Betty at once that way.

#### Scene 52.

Ext. Club Lawn

Mrs. Van and her court move toward first tee of golf links—Mrs. Van behaving as if not particularly excited over prospect of meeting Countess—as they go to background Mrs. Lovering and Betty come hastening after them—Mrs. Lovering hurries Betty.

#### Scene 53.

Ext. Club Drive

Mrs. Van and others come to drive to cross it toward links as Mrs. Lovering and Betty catch up with them—all pause for greetings—after moment, some one suddenly discovers motor arriving, off—all turn to look with quick interest—motor sweeps into scene—in it are Dr. Vavendish and Countess—he sees group of ladies, orders chauffeur to stop quickly—leaps down to assist Countess out.

## Scene 54.

Ext. Club Drive—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Cavendish gallantly assisting Countess to alight—(she in elaborate afternoon toilet, or gorgeous sports clothes, extremely modish, a trifle bizarre, but all exquisite smiles and graciousness)—she descends, tossing wrap to club servant, as group of women approaches—motor goes—Mrs. Van with others comes smilingly forward—Cavendish turns to them eagerly, begins to present Countess.

## Scene 55.

Ext. Club Drive—(CLOSE-UP)

Mrs. Vandergrift greets Countess, very cordial, but with hint of anxiety to please showing thru her stiff dignity—Countess vivacious, but with nice touch of deference to this leader of local society—Mrs. Van commits self to entire endorsement of Countess.

## Scene 56.

Ext. Club Drive—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Other women crowd up around Mrs. Vandergrift and Countess, eager for introduction—at one side is Betty, watching Countess' face with rather pathetic eyes—Countess acknowledges introductions right and left; suddenly, as if just catching sight of Betty, she turns to girl, to whom she is not yet introduced, stretches out hands with impulsive caprice which her rule justifies.

## Scene 57.

Ext. Club Drive—(CLOSE-UP)

Betty and Countess. Betty is a little surprised—Countess smiles, seizes girl's shoulders, looking at her with frank delight—says:

44. Spoken Title:

"Oh, my deah! What a wonderful complexion! For such loveliness I could—ah, what you say?—embrace you!"

Betty charmed with the compliment and graciousness of it—Countess beams upon her.

## Scene 58.

Ext. Club Drive—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess turns to Mrs. Vandergrift, insists on instant introduction to Betty—as Mrs. Van introduces them, Countess pats Betty's cheek, shakes her head in delighted admiration.

## Scene 59.

Ext. Club Drive—(CLOSE-UP)

Cavendish in background—slightly startled, but tremendously interested and amused.

## Scene 60.

Ext. Club Drive—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Mrs. Vandergrift presents Mrs. Lovering—Countess gracious, turns suddenly with Betty toward the links, laughs cheerfully about at whole group—says: "Oh, let us see the golf—I adore it!" Leads way off.

## Scene 61.

Ext. First Golf Tee

Several men and athletic girl or two (golf costume) arguing over some point, as one prepares to drive off (man about to drive is one of those who refused to contribute to Red Cross at Betty's request)—he takes off coat, lays it on sand-box—just then, all see Countess and others approaching, turn to greet them.

## Scene 62.

Ext. Golf Links—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess coming, with her arm in Betty's—making protege of her—others following—as they go thru foreground Cavendish comes in with pair of gossip and eager dowagers—they pause in foreground ask him question—with air of mild surprise at their ignorance—he answers:

45. Spoken Title:

"The Countess? Yes, indeed! She is scandalously rich—and a leader in Petrograd society!"



Women impressed, press eagerly forward—Cavendish grins with sporting enjoyment of game—follows slowly.

Scene 63.

Ext. First Tee

Countess receiving last of introductions to group there, all charmed with her—men very admiring and attentive—forgetting their fame for her—she turns as Cavendish comes up, still holding Betty's hand which she has now taken, she asks doctor:

46. Spoken Title: "But wheah is my friend, Saunders Julian?  
You said he was heah!"

There is immediate awkward moment—Cavendish starts, looks half around at Countess, then at Mrs. Vandergrift—Countess follows his glance at Mrs. Van, widens eyes as Mrs. Van stiffens and says coldly: "Mr. Julian is not being received here!" Countess stares, then purses lips with humorous dismay—then says:

47. Spoken Title: "Not being received! Oh, but I shall receive him!"

All listen agog—Mrs. Van in dilemma between dislike of Julian and wish to remain in Countess' good graces.

Scene 64.

Ext. First Tee—(CLOSE-UP)

Of Countess. Glances down at Betty with subtle hint of seeing how she will take it, as she says:

48. Spoken Title: "Why, Saundie and I were—what you call?—great pals, in Vienna! I—why, I love him like a brotheh!"

As Betty starts and looks up, Countess looks off quickly, smiles about as if innocent of any intention to interest Betty—Betty quickly in doubt whether to like this remarkable endorsement of Julian by such a pretty and sophisticated woman.

Scene 65.

Ext. First Tee

Mrs. Van tries to smile—Countess turns from her to men—says: "But, do not let us interrupt the sport—proceed—play!"—one of the men immediately offers her his place in game—she laughs, hesitates, all urge her—she gives Betty a pat, accepts, goes forward to tee.

Scene 66.

Ext. Countess' Back Yard

In corner of hedge, Soto and another Jap just completing thinning out place where one can get thru—sort of secret gate (if fence is more convenient, make it concealed swing gate)—Soto demonstrates by passing thru once or twice—then says:

49. Spoken Title: "Now the honorable Countess go through to Mist' Julian hiss house, w'en she like ver' sudden to beat it!"

Japs grin at each other, gather up tools and debris, start away.

Scene 67.

Ext. First Tee

Countess just ready to tee off, all watch, she drives, all look after ball, applaud, as if at very successful start—she laughs, steps back to sand-box, stands to watch her opponent drive off—(he is owner of coat on sand-box)—he begins fussily to place his ball—all watch him.

Scene 68.

Ext. First Tee—(CLOSE-UP)

Of Countess. Countess stands beside man's coat on sand-box, looks down at it, then, looking guardedly off, puts her hand against it, feels of it, feels pocket-book, hesitates an instant, looking quietly about, then slips her hand inside coat, brings out wallet, with pretense of looking off toward club, as if charmed with view, she turns back to crowd, looks quickly at wallet.

Scene 69.

Ext. First Tee—(CLOSE-UP)

Of wallet. Countess' hands hastily open it—it is fat with money—she hastily closes it.

## Scene 70.

Ext. First Tee

Man just driving off—Countess turns—tucking wallet into gown—Mrs. Van and others applaud drive—Countess claps her hands—calls out compliments—then turns and smiles indulgently at Mrs. Van who is displaying considerable enthusiasm—Countess says:

50. Spoken Title:

"It is such a pleasha, my deah Mrs. Vandergrift, to see such enjoyment of sports in one of youah matuah yeahs!"

She smiles with pretended admiration as if utterly unconscious of the sting in her words—Mrs. Van starts, bridles, but as Countess turns easily away, she quells her anger for policy's sake, looking about and speaking with superior patronage of Countess to those around her—only Bettey, beside Mrs. Van, smiles faintly at clever stab—looks wonderingly after Countess.

## Scene 71.

Ext. First Tee—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess joins her opponent on caddie—is just ready to start off for continuation of game—opponent turns to get coat—picks it up—turns to her, half mechanically feeling for wallet—Countess exchanging merry bandinage with Cavendish, who has come up to compliment her on her play, etc.—suddenly coat-owner misses wallet—utters exclamation and all look.

## Scene 72.

Ext. First Tee

Owner of pocket-book whirls—looks about for it on sand-box on ground under people's feet, etc.—explains hastily—turns to foreground and searches pockets—dismayed—Countess presses up with anxious inquiry—he tells her he's lost his wallet, etc.—she all sympathy instantly—takes his coat and pats pockets as if she thinks SHE can find it—he searches waistcoat inner pocket—she comes close to him—all sweet and grave interest—pats his waistcoat and his hip pocket.

## Scene 73.

Ext. First Tee—(CLOSE-UP)

Countess, her face raised to his—with the emotional sympathy of her sort—he rather a fool in his concern over his money—she takes his hand—pats it soothingly—then touches her breast—where at that moment reposes the stolen pocket-book—she says:

51. Spoken Title:

"Ah, deah friend! I have great sympathy for youah lost money! I assuah you—it touches my heart!"

Countess all sympathy, but man turns away from her rather rudely, thinking only of his loss—he says hastily that he must go to the club house and search—as others talk with him another of the men who refused to sign Betty's subscription book turns to Countess.

## Scene 74.

Ext. First Tee—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess and second man—he comments on other man's loss—she smiles at him—then looks off through lorgnette as if in anxious sympathy—then looks again at her companion—he flattered by her graciousness to him—turns head—looks back toward others as if in comment—Countess gracefully puts her lorgnette against his tie, as if half playfully—as he does not notice, she makes quick careful movement to lift his diamond pin.

## Scene 75.

Ext. First Tee—(CLOSE-UP)

Lorgnette,—just lifting handsome diamond pin from tie—pin comes out—starts out of picture on lorgnette.

## Scene 76.

Ext. First Tee—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess—takes pin calmly from lorgnette—holds it concealed in hand—man turns—she looks at his tie—suddenly says:

52. Spoken Title:

"But what has happened to the beautiful, exquisite diamond I saw you weah, today?"

Man grabs at his tie—discovers his loss—aghast—whirls suddenly—thinks—turns to Countess who pretends to be shocked—then he becomes alarmed



and cries out, "Why, my diamond pin has disappeared, too!" everybody turns—all begin to look about as if to see who could be a suspicious character, etc.

Scene 77.

Countess distressed—Mrs. Van assures her such a thing has NEVER before happened in THIS club—suggests that the game can go on—but Countess shakes head—"Oh, no, let us not play golf—let us go to the club house and search!"—all start—two robbed men hurrying ahead—rest gossiping—Countess calmly slips the purloined pin into her belt—(or other portion of gown)—joins Betty—Cavendish follows her, watching her curiously.

Scene 78.

Int. Club Lounge

Vandergrift and one or two friends playing a rubber of whist—smoking contentedly—robbed men hurry in—tell their news—servants up and listen—men begin to inquire of servants as to strangers about, etc.—whist game breaks up—crowd gathers—Vandergrift, after listening, turns to phone at hand—tells others will summon detectives—calls number.

Scene 79.

Ext. Police Station

Policemen and detectives pitching horse-shoes below office window, inside which sits man at desk—he answers phone, shows surprise, calls out window—officers gather—desk man singles out one detective—calls him up.

53. Subtitle:

"Gentleman Jess", Specialist in Upper Crust Crimes ..... Detective Boyle

Scene 80.

Ext. Police Station—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Boyle at window talks to Lieut. inside—(Boyle sleek-looking detective, rather conceited and thinking well of self)—Lieut. tells him of club thefts—he opens eyes—then grins—others crowd up to listen—ask grinning questions—Boyle turns to go.

Scene 81.

Int. Club Lounge

Vandergrift in foreground—has set down phone—is lighting cigar—Countess comes with Betty and others—looks at him, he sees her—stops, staring at her—taken at first sight—she smiles at him with affectation of shyness—Betty recognizes that they have not met—introduces them—Countess very arch and flattering to Van—he hugely pleased with her—fumbles his cigar—looks foolish—she daintily takes it from him—says: "Poor man, you're dying to smoke!"

Scene 82.

Int. Club Lounge—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess puts cigar into Van's lips—takes his match—lights it—holds it while he puffs—she smiles winningly into his face as she does it, as if only solicitous to give him pleasure—old Van is her slave—then, as he starts to talk to her she suddenly says: "Oh, but I must look to my valuables—perhaps I've been robbed, too!"—she turns hurriedly away—Van starts after her—fascinated—Betty turns unnoticed away.

Scene 83.

Int. Ladies' Cloak Room

Room empty—Countess shown in by maid who points to where her wrap hangs—Countess takes it down quickly—examines it—seems to miss something—exclaims—maid startled—Countess tells maid to run to tell other women to come and look to their valuables—maid turns—runs off—Countess looks after her an instant—then whirls to coats and hooks.

Scene 84.

Int. Ladies' Cloak Room—(CLOSE-UP)

Countess hastily looking for valuables—after instant, she finds purse in a coat pocket—takes roll of bills—drops purse back in pocket—then, side toward audience, hastily raises skirt—slips bills into stocking—suddenly starts, drops skirt, without changing attitude, begins to look excitedly through folds of her own wrap.

## Scene 85.

Int. Cloak Room

Several ladies hurry in with maid who summoned them—all excited—Countess turns instantly on them—exclaims:

54. Spoken Title: "My emerald brooch! I left it on my wrap; it, too, has disappeared."

All excited—ladies begin to hunt through wraps—Betty comes in—Countess bemoans loss—very snobbish type of woman who owns coat from which Countess took money, suddenly discovers her loss—turns angrily on maid—begins to berate her.

## Scene 86.

Int. Cloak Room—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Snob, maid and Countess. Snob accusing maid—Countess turns on her, she protests:

55. Spoken Title: "Madame! Remember, the men also have been robbed! The maid is as innocent as—as I myself!"

Snob abashed at rebuke from Countess—maid looks gratefully at her—Betty solicitous—other women chatter, but none miss anything—Countess describes her brooch to sympathetic listeners—then turns smilingly to Betty—shrugs, "Oh, well, what care I for one little brooch?"—adds:

56. Spoken Title: "Money will purchase new feminine trinkets, my deah—but will not buy back lost moments with the gentlemen!"

Betty smiles in spite of self—Countess draws her to door.

## Scene 87.

Ext. Club Porch

Fast motor draws up to steps—Detective Boyle jumps down—inquires of servant—then hurries in.

## Scene 88.

Int Club Lounge

Vandergrift and other men discuss robbery with robbed men—Countess and Betty come—men all attentive to Countess—as she tells of lost brooch—Boyle comes with servant—robbed men quickly tell story—woman, whose purse the Countess emptied, comes hurrying in—tells her story—all agog.

## Scene 89.

Int. Club Lounge—(CLOSE-UP)

Countess watches Betty with subtle smile—Betty looks off—listens in girlish excitement—Countess says to her:

57. Spoken Title: "Some people it hurts sadly to be—parted from theah money, my deah!"

Betty starts—looks up—then giggles—then nods—looks up, as if wondering if Countess has any deeper meaning in this seemingly chance remark.

## Scene 90.

Int. Club Lounge

Boyle finishes questioning the people who have lost money—comes to foreground to Countess—looks at her grimly—she smiles winningly at him—puts out her hand with her charming impulsiveness—says:

58. Spoken Title: "Ah, capitan! It is worth the loss of my little brooch to meet one of the clevah American detectives of whom I heah so much!"

Boyle instantly gratified—swells—becomes abashed at the same time—Countess goes on flattering him—she smiles into his eyes, as she tells of own loss.

## Scene 91.

Int. Club Lounge—(CLOSE-UP)

Countess smiles into Boyle's eyes—he perks up—grins rather foolishly back—he is as quickly a prey to her wiles as the rest (Don't play this too broadly—a little subtlety will be funnier and more convincing).

## Scene 92.

Int. Club Lounge

Detective tells crowd and Countess in particular that he will find the thief—Countess thanks him prettily—turns to foreground with Betty and her



mother, while Boyle looks surreptitiously after her—she turns—smiles a little archly at him over her shoulder—he hugely pleased—Cavendish comes up—speaks to Countess—she says: “Oh, I am going home now; you needn’t come, unless you like”—then to Betty:

59. Spoken Title: “Let me take you home. my deah! The men will be too much excited now to be interesting!”

Betty laughs—Mrs. Lovering assents—they turn to Mrs. Van who comes up at hand—explain they are going—Countess says: “These robberies have made me so nervous, my deah!” Mrs. Van nods sympathetically—then says:

60. Spoken Title: “But Countess, I must claim you for my house-party at Billowcrest next week!”

Countess all smiles instantly—“Oh, but surely! How delightful! I will by all means come!”—bows—turns away with Betty. Mrs. Lovering lingers to take special leave of Mrs. Van—then goes.

#### Scene 93.

Int. Club Lounge

Boyle talks with men about the robberies—Mrs. Van comes into foreground as men talk—she beckons to detective—he crosses promptly to her—she says:

61. Spoken Title: “I’m giving a house party at my seaside home. I want protection from such thefts as have occurred here!”

Boyle interested—she asks him if HE could come down to Billowcrest, etc.—he nods—promises to arrange it—she bows—goes.

#### Scene 94.

Ext. Betty’s Home

Countess’ handsome motor brings Betty, Mrs. Lovering and Countess to curb—footman opens car door—Mrs. Lovering out—Countess detains Betty by hand—she says:

62. Spoken Title: “I’m suah you are a heart-breakeh, my deah. Are you youahself quite fancy-free?”

Betty laughs—looks down.

#### Scene 95.

Ext. Betty’s Home

Countess takes Betty’s hand—quizzes her playfully—Betty holds Countess’ hand in both of hers—abashed, she turns one of Countess’ rings (handsome ruby solitaire of odd design)

#### Scene 96.

Ext. Betty’s Home

CLOSE-UP Betty’s fingers. Turn to Countess’ ring.

#### Scene 97.

Ext. Betty’s Home—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess says:

63. Spoken Title: “You must know Saunders Julian bettah. He already possesses MY heart!”

#### Scene 98.

Ext. Betty’s Home

Betty laughs shyly—alights—Countess waves—Loverings turn to go into house as car starts.

#### Scene 99.

Ext. Lovering Doorsteps

Betty and mother up—Mrs. Lovering pauses to look at a vine—Betty gazes wistfully at her—at last says:

64. Spoken Title: “Mother, if Mr. Julian is the Countess’ friend he may certainly be ours!”

Mrs. Lovering turns quickly on Betty—stares at her for a moment—Betty abashed—then Mrs. Lovering says: “I refuse to open that subject again at present, my dear. You will obey me in the matter!” she turns—goes in—Betty turns slowly, disappointed—then her lips begin to set—she will take action on her own account—she takes a resolution—goes in.

## Scene 100.

Int. Countess' Boudoir

Countess in—just taking off wig, with huge sigh of relief—begins to get out of women's togs as fast as possible—Soto in attendance—eagerly helps—she takes cigar—lights it—then takes out bills, pocketbook, etc. from neck and stocking—lays them on dresser—grins then takes up small book and pencil—begins to make record of them. (IRIS OUT)

65. Subtitle: At the Edge of an Enterprise!

## Scene 101.

Ext. Vandergrift Home—(IRIS IN)

On Vandergrifts just embarking in motor with servants and luggage for their seaside home.

## Scene 102.

Int. Countess' Boudoir

Julian in Countess' wig, just finishing dressing in smart costume with Soto's assistance—near at hand sits Cavendish looking on with amusement—another Jap man is packing last grip, and two large trunks stand in background—as Julian finally becomes the Countess, "she" turns grinning to Cavendish—picks up jewel-box—takes out and shows the "loot" from her club thefts—says:

66. Spoken Title: "So far, my deah Cavendish, the North Shore Club has contributed fairly generously to my—campaign!"

Cavendish stares—then laughs—Countess gives jewel-box to Jap to pack—surveys self in mirror—fixes hair-pin or two—then smiles approval—picks up two cocktails from tray at hand—gives one to Cavendish—then they touch glasses—toast the success of her plans—suddenly remembers pipe and tobacco jar—gives them, also, to Jap to pack—laughs—drinks—then whirls to wardrobe trunk.

## Scene 103.

Int. Countess' Boudoir—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess snatches gowns from wardrobe trunk—holds them up to display—laughs proudly—(gowns are beautiful)—then she shows mass of exquisite lingerie—Cavendish comes in—looks at it—grins—says:

67. Spoken Title: "But no one will see THIS!"  
 Countess looks up—laughs—says, "Is that so!"—then, with sly grin, adds:  
 68. Spoken Title: "You never can tell; there might be a fire!"  
 They laugh—Countess gives word to start—leads the way out—(IRIS OUT)  
 69. Subtitle: "Billowcrest" Receives its Guests.

## Scene 104.

Ext. Lawn at Billowcrest—(Handsome house in background) (IRIS IN)

On gathering of guests (all in flannels and sport clothes)—some in foreground shaking hands—others just arriving in motors with bags, etc.—some just coming from house, as if they have had time to dress, etc.—guests in foreground fan selves—speak of the unusual heat, etc.

## Scene 105.

Ext. Billowcrest Lawn

(Shot across lawns to show sea, if feasible—(might get it at the Virginia?))

## Scene 106.

Ext. Billowcrest Porch

Vandergrift receiving guests with cordial informality—directing servants, etc.—Betty comes from house with mother—all talk—motor rolls up with Countess and Cavendish—second motor behind with Jap maid with bags—Countess descends gaily—waves to Mrs. Vandergrift—she hurries up steps.

## Scene 107.

Ext. Billowcrest Porch—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Mrs. Vandergrift greets Countess effusively—then casually shakes Cavendish's hand—Mrs. Vandergrift very much interested in Countess—Mrs. Lovering and Betty come from house—join them—Countess instantly shows her favor for Betty—draws her to her side—pinches her cheek—beaming on her—nods, smiles at Mrs. Lovering—other guests come from house—crowd up, to be noticed by Countess—in background Detective Boyle wanders in—



sights Countess—braces up with conscious smile, as he looks for bow—Countess sees him—immediately exclaims—beckons—speaks.

Scene 108.

Ext. Billowcrest Porch—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Boyle flattered and delighted—comes forward with somewhat crude exhibition of gallantry—Mrs. Vandergrift explains he is here to prevent repetition of thefts, etc.—Countess gives him her hand with unusual favor—he bows over it—swells with gratification afterward—Countess smiles on Betty, but Betty's response is a little forced—she is jealous and doubtful of the Countess—Countess fans self—says:

70. Spoken Title: "Oh, isn't it wahm? I'm dying to get into the surf!"

Guests about to applaud this idea—Boyle looks over Countess' figure—thinks he wouldn't mind seeing her in bathing costume—says, "By all means, let us enjoy a bathe"—guests begin calling off, announcing to others the plan—some hustle away to prepare at once—Countess goes in with Mrs. Vandergrift.

Scene 109.

Ext. Billowcrest Porch—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Boyle looks after Countess—fascinated, as she goes—Cavendish in background grins at him—goes in, also.

Scene 110.

Ext. Lawn at Billowcrest

Young people race to get bathing suits—one boy comes running—waving his suit.

Scene 111.

Ext. Bath Houses

Workmen just finishing cleaning them out—boy comes running with suit—goes in one—slams door in terrible hurry to be first in—after moment, two pretty tom-boy girls come pell-mell after him and into next compartment.

Scene 112.

Ext. Lawn at Billowcrest

Guests, with Betty, come laughing and chaffing from house with bathing-suits—others, who will not swim, turn toward beach—Countess comes merrily out with bathing-suit under arm—guests capture her—all go rollicking off toward beach.

Scene 113.

Ext. Beach

Boy comes racing from bath house in bathing-suit—dances—yells triumphantly as he pounds on girls' door—girls suddenly open door—come out—barely inside their suits—just finishing last buttons—trio race for water.

Scene 114.

Ext. Bath Houses

Countess arrives with Betty and others—is assigned end bathhouse next to shrubbery—she begins to loosen her clothing, as she slips laughingly in—tells the rest she will beat them all into surf—others scramble for bath houses—Vandergrift hurries in with suit—looks about—then goes into compartment.

Scene 115.

Ext. Porch of House

Very tall and thin man in glasses comes gingerly out (striped bathing-suit and bare feet)—looks off—then begins very cautiously to step down path—favoring his tender feet.

Scene 116.

Ext. Shrubby

Boyle wanders slowly in—looks about—then off, as if trying to get good view of beach—selects place—then can't see—selects another—looks off—grins.

Scene 117.

Ext. Beach—(As seen by Boyle from a little distance)

Bathers beginning to come from bath houses.

Scene 118

Ext. Beach

Bathers coming out—look about for Countess—see her door still closed—

laugh at her slowness—Vandergrift comes hurrying (fat and funny old figure in bathing-suit)—all wonder at Countess' delay—Mrs. Vandergrift arrives with ladies who do not swim—all wait—at last Countess' door begins to open.

Scene 119.

Ext. Beach—(CLOSE-UP bath house door)

It opens slowly by littles—presently Countess puts her head out—sees line-up of waiting bathers.

Scene 120.

Ext. Beach

Line-up of expectant bathers waiting to see Countess.

Scene 121.

Ext. Beach—(CLOSE-UP bath house door)

Countess puts out a bare arm—waves at them, as if to shoo them away—then she laughs—suddenly flings open the door—slips out—a marvel of a figure in a daring suit—she throws kisses toward camera—then runs—jumps through foreground.

Scene 122.

Ext. Beach—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess jumps in among bathers—catches hold of two of the men, whom she merrily roughs a little—Betty looks on, a little disapproving—she is somewhat out of conceit with the Countess.

Scene 123.

Ext. Shrubby

Boyle, in his look-out, grins wide-eyed at sight—then decides he is too far away—looking about, moves hastily forward.

Scene 124.

Ext. Beach

Countess leads romping on the sands—challenges men to catch her—they try—she whirls to foreground just as a very sedate looking little man comes carrying set of boxing gloves—she sees them—pounces upon him—she inquires "Why the gloves?"—he explains, with the seriousness of one who takes exercise as a duty, that he warms up with them.

Scene 125.

Ext. Beach—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess laughs—seizes pair of the gloves—slips them on—challenges him to spar—he scared at her exuberance—demurs—backing away and offering gloves to younger man, who takes them willingly.

Scene 126.

Ext. Shrubby

Boyle peering out—becomes again dissatisfied with his distance from scene—again moves forward.

Scene 127.

Ext. Beach

Countess boxes with young man—dances all around him—taps him at will—he tries to tap her, but can't touch her—crowd applauds—old Vandergrift shakes with laughter—just then a servant comes to him with telegram.

Scene 128.

Ext. Beach—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Vandergrift opens telegram with sudden interest, while servant waits—after instant, he borrows pencil from servant—begins to write translation of code from memory on telegram.

Scene 129.

Ext. Beach

Countess boxing with young man—he tries to catch her—leaves himself wide open—she suddenly steps in—slugs him with right and left so vigorously that he throws up his hands and she dances away laughing, while crowd applauds.

Scene 130.

Ext. Beach—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Vandergrift completes translation of telegram, as his wife joins—curious about message—he shows it to her:



71. Insert: (Code telegram with translation written on it)  
No market for Gramercy take rise on fox fur.  
(Translation:)  
No dividend by U. S. Biscuit clean up by selling short—written over code words.

Vandergrifts grin over telegram—Vandergrift folds it—starts absently to put it into his pocket—finds no pocket in bathing suit—Mrs. Vandergrift says she will put it in her bag—he just giving it to her when Countess (boxing-gloves) comes racing in from background pursued by others—dodges around Vandergrift—she notices telegram as Mrs. Vandergrift puts it in bag—she instantly affects seriousness—inquires, “No bad news, I hope?”—Vandergrift smiling somewhat foolishly at her as she stands with hand on his arm, reassures her—she says:

72. Spoken Title: “Oh, yes! Telegrams do not mean bad news to you wonderful market kings!”

Countess all smiles at Vandergrift—then glances covertly at Mrs. Vandergrift’s bag, as she closes it—talks with alluring flattery to Vandergrift and he almost coos with pleasure in her attentions—Mrs. Vandergrift looks at them, bridleing a bit with jealousy as they turn away—as Countess and Vandergrift go toward beach, Boyle comes slowly in from background—eyes fixed on Countess as if he has been finally drawn from cover by the magnet—Mrs. Vandergrift looks at him—sees his fixed gaze—she is disgusted—says, sarcastically:

73. Spoken Title: “Hardly the place to look for pickpockets, detective!”

Boyle starts—turns—then grins—both look off.

Scene 131.

Ext. Beach

Bathers in group about Countess as she sheds gloves and proposes a dance—she grabs Vandergrift to make him dance.

Scene 132.

Ext. Beach—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Boyle and Mrs. Vandergrift—he embarrassed—then begins to explain that he must neglect no portion of the place, etc.

Scene 133.

Ext. Beach—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess ends brief dance with Vandergrift—laughs—then turns to foreground—looks covertly off toward Boyle and Mrs. Vandergrift.

Scene 134.

Ext. Beach

Boyle and Mrs. Vandergrift (as seen by Countess)—Mrs. Vandergrift lectures Boyle—then turns away as if to go to house—Boyle glances regretfully toward camera—then turns to return to grounds in slightly different direction from Mrs. Vandergrift.

Scene 135.

Ext. Beach—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess stands looking off while others rollick in background—Betty comes in—Countess slowly and absently twists ruby ring on her finger—Betty comes close—looks down at it—she compresses her lips—looks up at Countess—Countess starts as she speaks—Betty looks at ring—admires it—then asks question—Countess a little taken aback—then answers:

74. Spoken Title: “This ring? Oh, it—ah—was the gift of a very deah friend, my love!”

Countess watching shrewdly—sees Betty is jealous—she is suddenly enlightened—smiles as Betty looks at ring, then off somewhat disturbed—Countess smiles again—shrewdly—starts to talk to Betty—when others come in and say it is time for the bathing now—point off at sea—Countess looks.

Scene 136.

Ext. Waterside

Several bathers in water—Vandergrift comes gingerly in—wades out—rollicking youngsters splash him—much to his dismay.

## Scene 137.

Ext. Beach—(SEMI CLOSE-UP) (Shoot toward bath houses in background) Countess is urged by Betty and bathers, among whom is Cavendish, now, to enter water—she laughs—draws back—looks down at self—touches her becoming coiffeur—shakes head—she is perfectly dry of course—says:

75. Spoken Title: "Oh, deah, no! I might get chilled! I've been in long enough!"

All astonished—say, "Why, you haven't been in at all"—she looks at them a moment, smiling—then suddenly laughs, whirls and runs away for bath-houses in background—HOLD as she runs—others laugh and turn toward sea.

## Scene 138.

Int. Bathhouse

Countess comes in—shuts and locks door—pauses—thinks swiftly—looks at her hanging clothes, shakes head—looks down at self—then up at window—decides on action—jumps to window and starts out, head first.

## Scene 139.

Ext. Side of Bath House

Countess in bathing suit comes out head first—turns over—drops close to shrubbery—jumps up to look hastily round—then starts cautiously off toward house.

## Scene 140.

Ext. Beach

Bathers in surf.

## Scene 141.

Ext. Tool House

Lawn-Mower, etc. by open door—Countess from shrubbery—looks cautiously about—sees tool-house door open—runs to it—peers in—suddenly laughs—steps in.

## Scene 142.

Int. Mrs. Vandergrift's Bedroom

Mrs. Vandergrift in and to dresser—lays her mesh-bag on dresser—prinks a little—then pauses—looks off—she is somewhat disgusted as she thinks of how the Countess monopolizes the men, etc.—then begins to powder her nose, etc.

## Scene 143.

Ext. Tool House

Countess to doorway—just scrambling into overalls she has found—puts on jumper and slouch hat—laughs—starts away.

## Scene 144.

Ext. Shrubbery

Boyle wandering grimly through—stops—looks off as if toward beach—grins—then goes on.

## Scene 145.

Ext. Shrubbery

Countess (in overalls and hat) in—looks off—sees Boyle in background—ducks down out of sight—looks off and up—suddenly starts and grins.

## Scene 146.

Ext. House

A second floor window, Mrs. Vandergrift is examining self in hand mirror.

## Scene 147.

Ext. Shrubbery

Countess in overalls grins exultantly—rises—peers about—then sees something else interesting—goes off.

## Scene 148.

Int. Mrs. Vandergrift's Bedroom

Mrs. Vandergrift finishes prinking with hand mirror—lays it on dresser—picks up bag—then lays it down again—goes out.

## Scene 149.

Ext. Near Fruit Tree—(Ladder against tree)

Countess in overalls comes in—sees ladder and basket beside it—thinks—looks off—starts to take ladder down—just then Boyle comes in from back-



ground behind her—sees her—he comes forward as she gets ladder down—asks question—Countess starts.

Scene 150.

Ext. Near Fruit Tree—(CLOSE-UP)

Of Countess in overalls—startled—stands still—thinks—then coughs behind her hand—coolly pulls hat down over her face a bit—turns.

Scene 151.

Ext. Near Fruit Tree—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Boyle inquiring about fruit—pays little attention to Countess, as she glances at him—she replies that she is picking fruit for the house, etc.—bends again busily to ladder—Boyle glances at her—then shrugs—goes—she works a moment—then pauses—looks after him—laughs—starts quickly to carry ladder off.

Scene 152.

Ext. House

Mrs. Vandergrift out—starts away—after moment, Countess (overalls) pops up from behind bush—peers off—then begins to drag out ladder.

Ext. Beach

Scene 153.

Bathers coming out of water—have had enough—Betty and Cavendish together—he urges one more plunge—she shakes head—races for bath house—he shrugs—follows.

Scene 154.

Ext. House

Ladder up—Countess (overalls) just climbing—she looks around—then hurriedly scrambles up—as she does so, a rip in side of trousers shows a bare limb.

Scene 155.

Int. Mrs. Vandergrift's Bedroom

Countess (overalls) suddenly appears outside open window—looks back—scrambles in—looks hastily about—sees dresser—runs to it.

Scene 156.

Int. Mrs. Vandergrift's Bedroom—(CLOSE-UP) (Dresser)

Countess (overalls) looks at dresser—sees bag—grabs it—opens it—finds telegram—opens that—reads:

76. Insert:

FLASH of telegram and translation as in  
Insert 73.

Countess laughs—thinks cunningly—then thrusts telegram back in bag—looks about—sees jewel-case—grabs and opens it—finds necklace—lifts it up with slow exultation.

Scene 157.

Ext. Near Fruit Tree

Boyle comes slowly back—tramps with hands behind him—bored—comes to deserted basket of fruit—stops—stares at it—then looks up tree and around for gardener—as he does not see him, he grows curious—begins to walk away—looking for him.

Scene 158.

Int. Mrs. Vandergrift's Bedroom

Countess (overalls) finishes examining necklace—suddenly she starts to pull up leg of trousers—finds rip—through it crams necklace into her bathing stocking—then whirls toward window.

Scene 159.

Ext. Bath Houses

Betty, Cavendish and other bathers out—talk—then start to stroll toward house.

Scene 160.

Ext. Garden

Boyle peering about—suddenly sights something off—amazed—starts forward—shouting.

Scene 161.

Ext. House

Countess (overalls) just descending ladder—starts at shout—looks around—nearly falls off ladder—then slides down to ground—whirls to run away—

Boyle rushes in—looks up at window—then shouts again—servant runs out—Boyle shouts warning of robbery at her—whirls to pursue Countess—servant runs off—screaming alarm.

Scene 162.

Ext. Tool House

Countess (overalls) runs in in panic—hesitates—gets idea—runs on.

Scene 163.

Ext. Lawn

Mrs. Van talking with non-bathing guests—servant runs in with alarm—great excitement—Mrs. Van runs toward house.

Scene 164.

Ext. Tool House

Boyle up—looks in—then look around—rushes off, on Countess' trail.

Scene 165.

Ext. Side of bath house

Countess in overalls rushes from bushes—leaps to window—then goes in head first.

Scene 166.

Ext. Lawn

Guests in huge excitement—bathers come up to get news—Mrs. Van comes rushing out with mesh-bag and jewel case. She tells them her necklace is missing—Vandergrift comes panting up—she whirls tells him.

Scene 167.

Int. Bath House

Countess stripping off overalls—wads them up with hat—throws them out window.

Scene 168.

Ext. Side of bath house

Boyle just rushing past—overalls come flying from window—hit him in head—he stops—grabs clothes—looks at them—recognizes them—stares—then calls out—looks up.

Scene 169.

Int. Bath House

Countess hears Boyle's cry—is scared—then adopts bold measures—steps to window.

Scene 170.

Ext. Side of bath house

Boyle staring up—Countess looks out—sees him—hesitates an instant—then adopts indignant air—demands:

77. Spoken Title: "Who threw those horrid overalls in heah?"  
Boyle amazed—then nonplussed—stares from overalls to Countess—then tells her of robbery.

Scene 171.

Int. Bath House—(CLOSE-UP)

Countess, as seen through window from outside, feigns consternation at news—she gestures that the thief must have run on toward the sea.

Scene 172.

Ext. Side of bath house

Other men hurry in and join detective—who explains briefly—Countess waves at them, urging them to hurry on toward sea and catch thief—they go.

Scene 173.

Int. Bath House

Countess sinks back panting—then laughs—pulls necklace from stocking and looks at it—(IRIS OUT)

78. Subtitle: Half an hour later—suspicion!

Scene 174.

Ext. "Billowcrest" porch

Guests gathered, listening to Boyle and others as they speculate about robbery with the Vandergrifts—the Countess comes coolly in, dressed exquisitely again—she expresses the utmost sympathy with Mrs. Van, etc.—the men all crowd about her and she tells her story.

Scene 175.

Ext. "Billowcrest" porch—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)



Betty listening doubtfully to Countess in background as she talks, glib and suave—Boyle stands near Betty, grinning admiringly at Countess—Betty looks at him, then touches his arm—he turns to her a little impatiently—she hesitates—then smiles very sweetly on him—he takes notice quickly and bends to listen—she says:

79. Spoken Title: "Doesn't this seem a little—er—queer? The Countess—it all seems so—fortuitous!"

Boyle opens his eyes in amazement—he looks off at Countess—starts to make indignant protest—stops, stares at Betty—then hesitates—Betty looks at him, then at Countess—she herself did not quite mean to cast suspicion on the Countess, but she gets the idea from his manner—she looks Boyle in the eyes searchingly as the idea grows in her mind.

Scene 176.

Ext. "Billowcrest" porch—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess as she turns from conversation with the Vans and looks off—sees Cavendish looking amusedly at her from background—she hesitates, then smiles and goes straight toward him—Van in foreground turns to his wife with sudden recollection of his telegram—asks question—she opens bag and gives him the wire—he sighs with relief and pockets it.

Scene 177.

Ext. "Billowcrest" porch—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Countess approaching Cavendish, smiling—says a casual word—glances warily back—then, covering her communication with playful manner, says quickly:

80. Spoken Title: "Wire our brokers to sell U. S. Biscuit short. It will pass its dividend!"

She makes a merry added remark and turns easily toward Betty and Boyle.

Scene 178.

Ext. "Billowcrest" porch—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Betty and Boyle assume casual manner as Countess come up—Countess takes Betty's arm and holds it—to Boyle she smiles effusively and says:

81. Spoken Title: "Let me compliment you, detective, on youah powers of deduction and presence of mind—in so closely tracing ouah thief!"

Boyle can't resist her charm and flattery—he smiles with pleasure and thanks her—she smiles significantly and turns away—Betty looks after her doubtfully—then, as Boyle turns and tells her "That woman cannot be anything but honest!"—Betty uses her own smile on him and says, "I'm sure YOU won't make any mistake," Boyle swells up, "Of course not!" etc. Then, as Betty leaves him, he looks back after Countess and rubs his chin doubtfully. (IRIS OUT.)

82. Subtitle: A Week Later,  
The "Countess" plans to Entertain.  
Scene 179.

Int. Countess' Drawing room (IRIS IN)

Julian in man's clothes, looking about—he pauses before statue, grins at it—then turns away and picks up phone—he adopts Countess' manner and gives number—waits, takes out cigar and puts it in mouth—then speaks to phone, with Countess' air—waits:

Scene 180.

Int. Lovering's Hallway

Maid at phone, calls off to Betty—Betty comes quickly and answers phone.

Scene 181.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room (CLOSE-UP)

Julian at phone—smiles quickly, then carefully adopts Countess' manner and says:

83. Spoken Title: "Oh, my deah! I am planning a lawn fete at the Country Club. Will you come oveh—at youah convenience, and—ah—help me?"

Julian talks on, with elaborate manner of Countess.

Scene 182.

Int. Lovering's Hallway (CLOSE-UP)

Betty at phone—she considers, hesitates, at last assents—she hangs up,

thinks, purses lips, then suddenly makes up her mind to go at once—she catches hat from stand nearby and starts out.

Scene 183.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room

Julian has hung up—stands looking at phone and smiling to himself in fondness of Betty—then he smokes and looks at watch—then strolls out.

Scene 184.

Ext. Before Countess' gate

Betty comes hurrying up and turns in—as she does so, she stops suddenly, looking up:

Scene 185.

Ext. Countess's House

Julian inside window, smoking idly and looking out—he does not see her.

Scene 186.

Ext. Countess' gate

Betty gasps—then suddenly feigns not to see Julian—she hesitates an instant, then proceeds toward house.

Scene 187.

Int. Countess' Boudoir

Julian at window, looking out, suddenly sights Betty and starts back—he looks hastily at watch—then peers cautiously out—then suddenly whirls and calls Soto off scene—he grabs at gown on chair, discards it—seizes negligee—Soto in—Julian gives him hurried instructions—Soto goes—Julian scrambles to dress in negligee.

Scene 188.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room

Jap butler just showing Betty in—Betty asks for Countess and indicates that she just phoned for her—Jap bows and goes—Betty, perturbed, walks the floor.

Scene 189.

Int. Countess' Boudoir

"Countess" just completing hasty dressing, is in wig and negligee—Jap butler comes—Countess hurries out.

Scene 190.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room

Betty, walking floor—suddenly sees statue—stops short and stares—then she shows shocked dislike and contempt for it—just then Countess comes in and sees her—grasps her dislike for statue and comes forward—Betty sees her and turns, a little abashed—Countess all smiles, says: "You do not like my statue?" Betty hesitates—then shakes her head and says:

84. Spoken Title: "Countess! No American lady could have such a — thing in her drawing room!"

Countess upset—shrugs, smiles, Betty shows repugnance for statue—as she looks at it, the Countess looks at her, and Julian's manner shows through Countess' veneer, as he is genuinely upset at her rebuke, etc., but Betty turns and looks at Countess—shows that other matters are on her mind—she says:

85. Spoken Title: "I thought I saw—er—your friend Mr. Julian —er—coming in!"

Countess starts—then covers it and turns, all surprise and smiles—she shakes her head—"Oh, no! He has not been here," etc. Betty shows her disbelief despite herself—Countess laughs suddenly and pats her shoulder—she says:

86. Spoken Title: "My deah! Do you mean to tell me you see visions of him—wheah he is not?"

Betty hugely embarrassed and annoyed—but she covers it—as Countess turns away, however, to her desk, Betty looks darkly after her.

Scene 191.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room—(CLOSE-UP)

Countess comes to desk with pile of invitations on it—looks covertly back at Betty—covers a smile—then turns and beckons her—as Betty comes in, Countess shows invitations and begins to talk casually of her plans—(IRIS OUT)

87. Subtitle: A Singular Dilemma.



## Scene 192.

Ext. Julian's Home—(IRIS IN)

Cavendish alighting from motor—starts toward house—sees Julian coming off scene—waits—Julian up as if just arrived home from walk—he is in a blue funk—greet—Cavendish sees something is wrong and inquires.

## Scene 193.

Ext. Julian's Home—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Julian and Cavendish—Julian says:

88. Spoken Title: "I'm in a singular mess of trouble. The girl I love is insanely jealous of the Countess I impersonate!"

Cavendish laughs with delight—he chaffs—Julian, utterly serious, swears—Cavendish laughs again—at last he says:

89. Spoken Title: "There's only one cure for such a situation! You'll have to kill the Countess!"

Julian stares—suddenly the idea strikes him as immense—he grabs Cavendish and, talking eagerly, steers him toward house. (IRIS OUT)

90. Subtitle: On the Night of the Lawn Fete.

## Scene 194.

Int. Countess' Boudoir—Night—(IRIS IN)

Countess just completing toilette—she fusses extravagantly to have every effort KILLING—jewels, earrings, etc.

## Scene 195.

Int. Countess' Hallway—Night

Jap butler just opening door to Betty—she is in evening gown and wrap and has called to go with Countess—she inquires for Countess—Jap indicates Countess is nearly ready and starts to show Betty into drawing room. Betty hesitates, thinks, then decides she will go up to Countess' boudoir—tells Jap so and starts. He is startled, starts to interfere, then doesn't dare, then, distressed trails along, dodging to and fro behind Betty, but not daring to pass her.

## Scene 196.

Int. Countess' Boudoir—(Night)

Shoot past Countess to show her resplendent reflection in mirror as she surveys her completed toilet—she smiles at herself—suddenly she starts and stares—in mirror appears reflection of Betty behind her. Countess whirls in sudden half panic—Betty comes in and pauses, marveling at beauty of Countess—Countess glances about to see what things may be in view that will betray her.

## Scene 197.

Int. Countess' Boudoir—(SEMI CLOSE-UP) (NIGHT)

Countess, back to camera, smiles at Betty, who surveys her in wondering astonishment—in foreground is chair with suspenders on it. Countess turns as if to set out chair for Betty—sees suspenders—covers them from Betty with her own figure—grabs them and tosses them into waste-basket—sees a man's shoe on the floor and kicks it surreptitiously.

## Scene 198.

Int. Countess' Boudoir—(CLOSE-UP) (NIGHT)

Man's shoes on floor by dresser—Countess' slippered foot kicks it under dresser.

## Scene 199.

Int. Countess' Boudoir—(SEMI CLOSE-UP) (NIGHT)

Countess all smiles as she gives Betty a chair—then she looks anxiously about for other betraying things—hurriedly she turns toward her bedroom, saying she will get her wrap and be ready—she goes. Betty does not sit—she surveys the room—then goes to dresser and looks in mirror.

## Scene 200.

Int. Countess' Boudoir—(CLOSE-UP) (NIGHT)

Betty at dresser, looks in mirror—she pretends to adjust a lavalliere of sapphires she wears—looks off—then down at dresser—suddenly she sees an open letter at one side—stares at it—then picks it up.

91. Insert: Letter, which Mrs. Lovering wrote to Julian (insert 29) in which she asked him to cease his attentions to Betty.

Betty stares—she is instantly confirmed in her suspicions that the Countess and Julian are intimates—she looks again at dresser—she sees a man's watch and picks it up.

Scene 201.

Int. Countess' Boudoir—(CLOSE-UP) (NIGHT)

Julian's watch—she turns it over and initials or monogram S. J. appear on it—then DISSOLVE IN Julian looking at his watch in miniature on the watch itself—DISSOLVE OUT.

Scene 202.

Int. Countess' Boudoir—(CLOSE-UP) (NIGHT)

Betty scared—convinced the Countess is a thief or something worse—thinks—then controls herself—lays down watch and letter and turns—after a moment the Countess hurries in in wrap ready to go—sees Betty standing apparently unobserving of anything and heaves a long sigh of relief—she says: "Come, my deah! I'm ready!" and leads Betty out. Betty follows, looking back an instant and compressing her lips with a resolve.

Scene 203.

Ext. Lovering's Home—(NIGHT)

Mrs. Lovering out to Motor in evening gown and wrap—and maid attends her. As she gets into motor messenger comes up with note—he speaks to maid—Maid turns quickly with letter to Mrs. Lovering and says:

92. Spoken Title: "For Miss Betty, Madame."

Mrs. Lovering takes letter, glances at it, says she will take it to Betty and car starts as maid turns to sign messenger's book—IRIS OUT.

93. Subtitle: "And all the World, and his Wife, were there!"

Scene 204.

Ext. Club Lawn—Night—(IRIS IN)

On brilliant throng under festooned lanterns. In background—crowds in porches—dancing inside. Countess, Mrs. Van, Mrs. Lovering and Betty receiving late guests. Betty is without her lavalliere now, but doesn't notice its absence—as last guests pass in, Boyle comes from background and speaks to Countess—she greets him as if gratified to see him. Mrs. Van looks at him askance.

Scene 205.

Ext. Club Lawn—(Night) (SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Boyle, Countess and Betty—Boyle assures Countess he is taking every precaution to watch for thieves, etc. tonight—he says:

94. Spoken Title: "There won't be no thefts tonight, Dutch-ess! Or if they is, we'll guard every exit and pinch the thief!"

Countess says she is sure he will protect them all—smiles and turns to walk toward guests with Mr. Van and Mrs. Lovering—Betty lingers and then turns quickly to Boyle—she draws him aside.

Scene 206.

Ext. Club Lawn—(Night) (SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Betty and Boyle against dark background. Betty indicates Countess off and says:

95. Spoken Title: "It's terrible—but SHE'S the thief! I found Mr. Julian's watch—and—and a letter at her house tonight!"

Boyle amazed—then skeptical—but Betty is so sure and earnest that she begins to convince him—she says:

96. Spoken Title: "Wherever she goes, there are thefts—and there were none before she came!"

Boyle assents, wondering—then he sets his jaw—he promises he will watch the Countess. Betty hurries away.

Scene 207.

Ext. Club Porch

Countess, Mrs. Lovering and Mrs. Van. Mrs. Lovering suddenly remembers the note she has for Betty. She takes it out and turns to look back for Betty. Betty comes hurrying in—receives her note and opens it to read. Countess watches her.



97. Insert:

(NOTE)

My dear Miss Lovering:

I wonder if you are ready to report subscriptions from the Club for the Red Cross work.

We are making up our reports and—

Betty looks up in dismay. Countess inquires pleasantly what is the matter. Betty shows her the note. Countess smiles—

98. Spoken Title:

“Oh! Mr. Julian told me the Club’s contributions would be—ah—considerable!”

Betty starts at mention of Julian and draws back a step. Countess smiles subtly—just then Mr. Van comes to claim dance with Countess and as she turns, smilingly, to him, he shows the foolishness of the senile old beau, flattered by young beauty. Betty and Mrs. Van, with differing expressions of disgust, watch them go. Cavendish hurries up and claims dance with Betty—she assents.

Scene 208.

Ext. Club Lawn—(Night)

Boyle comes up to two plain clothes officers and tells them his new suspicions—they are surprised—he tells them to watch carefully and sends one off in one direction and another in another.

Scene 209.

Int. Club dancing room—(Can use Lounge) (Night)

Vandergrift and Countess dance to a stop in corner by conservatory entrance and almost at same moment Betty and Cavendish dance up and pause—all laugh—then Countess compliments Van on his dancing. He is foolishly pleased. Cavendish claims next dance with Countess and Van turns to Betty, who consents to dance with him. They walk away. Cavendish turns hastily to Countess and says:

99. Spoken Title:

“U. S. Biscuit passed its dividend to-day, and the stock tumbled. Your brokers cleaned up about ninety thousand for you!”

Countess laughs—then as Cavendish gives her a list of her winnings, she tells him to let her slip into conservatory alone and look it over. He assents. She slips into conservatory. He turns easily away.

Scene 210.

Int. Dancing Room—(Night)

Betty and Van walk in near orchestra—orchestra starts to play. Van wants her to dance. She is about to do so when she puts her hand up to her throat and misses her lavalliere—instantly she is startled—then frightened—looks all around—then tells Van she has lost her lavalliere. He starts and stares. Then says, “Thieves again!”—Betty shocked and frightened—Van looks around—one of Boyle’s officers in near exit in background. Van calls to him and gives alarm.

Scene 211.

Int. Dancing Room—(LONGER SHOT) (Night)

Excitement about Betty and Van, as officer runs up—people stop dancing and crowd up. Betty half hysterical. Van gives hasty orders—officer runs off.

Scene 212.

Int. Conservatory—(Night)

Countess looking over memo of her winnings (or change), grinning, suddenly she starts and listens—then parts foliage and looks off.

Scene 213.

Int. Conservatory—(Night) (SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Near door in side of conservatory, opening on garden—two officers stand—one has just rushed in from outside excitedly and is warning the other—he says:

100. Spoken Title:

“De dip’s busy agin! Boss says pinch dat Dutch-ess! She’s the light-fingered one!”

Officers plan quickly—one shuts door and sets his back against it—other starts toward camera.

Scene 214.

Int. Conservatory—(Night) (SEMI CLOSE-UP)

(Dancing room in far background). Countess, in alarm, turns toward camera

she does not know what to do—looks toward dancing room in background—hesitates.

Scene 215.

Int. Near Entrance to Conservatory—(Night)

Dancing crowd pressing that way. Boyle and officers ahead. Guests pointing and saying Countess went into conservatory. Some show eager curiosity, others show doubt—some are protesting and indignant. Betty, frightened, in care of Van.

Scene 216.

Int. Conservatory—(Night)

Countess moving toward dancing room in background—stops suddenly—officers appear at entrance. Countess whirls and runs back.

Scene 217

Int. Nook in Conservatory—(Night)

Countess in—officer against door in background. Countess stops—looks down at herself—fingers gown, etc.—thinks it will be fatal for her to be caught and searched—suddenly whirls—and then abruptly sees light-switch at hand—she steps to it—hesitates—listens—then laughs daringly—then snaps out lights.

Scene 218.

Int. Beside Conservatory Garden Door—(Night)

Officer steps into patch of moonlight, looking toward dancing-room. Countess slips in behind him and swings on him, sending him crashing among the plants. Then she whirls to door—she can barely be seen as she fumbles at lock.

Scene 219.

Int. Conservatory—(Night)

Officers under moonlit glass hear crash, etc. and point off toward door—rush that way.

Scene 220.

Int. Garden Door—(Night)

Officer on floor in moonlight, tries to get up, holding his head. Countess fumbles helplessly at unfamiliar lock of door, but she can only be seen as dark figure. Other officers rush in—Countess shrinks into absolute darkness beside moonlit window—officers rush.

Scene 221.

Int. Garden Door—(Night) (SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Officers in moonlight. A hand comes out of darkness in a punch and an officer goes down—Two others rush into darkness. Next instant one comes staggering out, his hands up, and falls. Then the other comes headlong as if thrown from a hiplock—crowd turns in a panic.

Scene 222.

Int. Conservatory Entrance—(NIGHT)

Crowd in a panic run toward dancing room.

Scene 223.

Ext. Conservatory Garden Door—(Night)

Door opens suddenly and Countess bursts out—she is torn and disheveled but gloriously excited—she hesitates an instant, thinks, then gathers her skirts and runs off into darkness.

Scene 224.

Int. Dancing Room—(Night)

Cavendish, near entrance, watches the excited crowd near conservatory—he grins a little—then, not wishing to be seen, he turns and goes out toward front.

Scene 225.

Ext. Club Drive—(Night)

Jap chauffeur at Countess' car—Countess runs up quickly—warns him to be quiet—she tells him quickly her plan—points off and around club, etc.—jumps into car and he leaps to wheel to start away.

Scene 226.

Int. Conservatory—(Night)

Officers nursing injuries and talking excitedly as they look off toward



garden door—one says:

101. Spoken Title: "Be dad, dey wasn't no Dutch-ess behind DAT punch!"

Officers all agree that no woman ever put up the scrap which just defeated them—they begin gingerly to go forward, now drawing clubs and guns.

Scene 227.

Ext. Front of Club—(Night)

Countess' car just stopping—she lies on cushions inside as if in faint—Jap chauffeur leaps down and starts to go into Club—Cavendish comes to steps at hand, looking off—Jap stops short, stares at him, then calls, Cavendish turns, then comes running.

Scene 228.

Ext. Front of Club—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Cavendish at car, opens door and stares at Countess—she opens an eye, sees him, looks guardedly off, then says quickly:

102. Spoken Title: "Tell the detectives their 'Dutch-ess' has been robbed—and fatally hurt, here in the porch. You're taking her home—to die!"

Cavendish hardly gets it for an instant, then he grasps the idea and whirls—hesitating an instant, he runs into the Club—Countess directs chauffeur to work over her as if she is hurt, etc.—he begins and she settles back as if unconscious.

Scene 229.

Int. Dancing Hall—(Night)

Cavendish in and to crowd—he shouts his news that Countess has been robbed—all turn and stare—some astonished, others curious, some satisfied that this supports their opinion that the Countess is innocent—Betty horrified—they press around Cavendish and he turns toward door.

Scene 230.

Ext. Front of Club—(Night)

Chauffeur and maid come to car and work over apparently unconscious Countess—Cavendish and many of crowd, including Betty, come running out—Cavendish into car with maid—he warns crowd away—Betty in f. g. looks on in terror—chauffeur to wheel—drives away—Betty turns to camera, terrified—(IRIS OUT)

Scene 231.

Int. Dancing Room—(Night)

Officers in, excited, inquiring—Boyle much chagrined and mystified—Mrs. Van comes to him and sneers at his failure—crowd presses about, indignant at charge he made against Countess.

Scene 232.

Ext. Front of Club—(Night)

Mrs. Lovering and Betty come to take their car—Betty sick at heart—her mother kinder than usual—they enter their car.

Scene 233.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room—(Night)

Cavendish, chauffeur, maid and Soto come in, carrying the torn and disheveled Countess—come to foreground—suddenly Countess rouses miraculously and struggles to her feet in foreground—then she turns on Cavendish and gives swift instructions—points to 'phone—then she turns and looks around. She catches sight of pier-glass at hand, she looks at it, then at Soto—then she grins and says to Soto:

103. Spoken Title: "Soto, you've helped me do many a strange thing—but tonight comes the supreme test of your loyalty. We must commit—murder!"

Scene 234.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room—(NIGHT) (SEMI CLOSE-UP of Pier Glass) Countess' reflection as she stands pointing to herself—Soto's reflection beside her as he stares, then suddenly breaks into enlightened grin. Cavendish steps into reflected scene with 'phone in his hand and asks Countess a question. Countess turns with a laugh and gives him instructions—he begins to phone.

## Scene 235.

Int. Betty's Bedroom

Betty stands weeping before dresser—her mother tries to comfort her and is loosening her gown for her—suddenly Mrs. Lovering starts and stops—and then from bosom of Betty's gown lifts out the lost lavallier and holds it up. Both stare—then Mrs. Lovering shows the lavallier clasp to be bent and broken. Betty suddenly collapses and falls sobbing into her mother's arms.

## Scene 236.

Int. Countess' Boudoir—(NIGHT)

Countess in with Cavendish—servants busy about. Countess beckons Cavendish to foreground and opens drawer—from it she takes papers and shows them to him—she says:

104. Spoken Title: "I've been preparing for a sudden finish, my deah doctah. I've disposed of my—ah—loot, foh cash!"

Cavendish takes papers in hand and stares at them.

105. Insert: (Papers in Doctor's hands. At end of a check shows at his side, but on top is a letter)  
Red Cross Society  
Brainerd Bldg., City,  
Gentlemen:

Enclosed amount was collected by Miss Betty Lovering, and friends, from members of the North Shore Club. List of donors appended so that you can publish it.

Sincerely,

Saunders Julian.

(After time for reading elapses, Dr.'s hand moves list over face of letter and IRIS narrows down to show:

Mr. & Mrs. Esmond Vandergrift.....\$50,000  
(Dr.'s hand moves to bottom of list and IRIS shows)

Countess Raffelski .....\$10,000

Countess laughs at Cavendish' astonishment—then shows one more letter.  
She says:

106. Spoken Title: "And a copy of this will reach each of the generous contributors tomorrow morning, with their newspapers!"

107. Insert: (Letter)

My Dear Mrs. Vandergrift:

Your lost necklace has been sold and the proceeds given to the Red Cross Society, as you will see by the morning papers. Unless you court undesirable publicity, no one will ever know that you are not as generous as you appear.

Yours truly,

Marka, Countess Raffelski.

Cavendish turns from letter, stares at Countess, then roars with laughter. Countess grabs him and covers his mouth with her hand—she looks around with mock apprehension and says:

108. Spoken Title: "My deah doctah! Don't you realize that I am dying?"

Both laugh—then Countess turns to Soto and gives papers to him, telling him to see to their immediate delivery, etc.—then she begins to tell further plans to Cavendish—(IRIS OUT).

109. Subtitle: A Breakfast Appetizer  
Scene 237.

Ext. Corner of Terrace—(IRIS IN)

On Mrs. Vandergrift at breakfast, against background of vines.

She is staring at the paper already spread in her hands—she reads:



110. Insert:

(Double Column Headlines)

Countess Raffelski Dying

Shock of brutal robbery at Club causes heart failure, physician says:

After a moment PAN (or shift paper) to show headlines in another column:

Big Gifts to Red Cross

Country Club members make extraordinary contributions to worthy cause.

(Item headed by list of contributions in bold face)

Mr. &amp; Mrs. Esmond Vandergrift, \$50,000 (etc.)

Mrs. Vandergrift stares at paper—then picks up open letter and stares at that. She grimaces, as she recognizes her predicament. She starts to rise—stops, looks at letter again—then crushes it in her hand and sits staring at paper. (IRIS OUT)

Scene 238.

Int. Countess' Hallway—(IRIS IN)

On Cavendish facing tearful Betty, who has just arrived and is begging to be allowed to go up and see Countess—as they talk. Soto at door listens—Dr. tells Betty that Countess is dying, etc. Soto hears ring and opens door. Boyle presses in—sees Cavendish and Betty and comes at once to them. He pulls from his pocket a torn bit of finery and buttons and says roughly:

111. Spoken Title:

"Found in the Club conservatory—part o' de Dtchess's glad rags!"

Betty and Cavendish stare—Boyle wants to know what about it. Cavendish turns on him and orders him to be quiet—points upstairs and tells him Countess is dying. Boyle hushes abruptly, he looks at Dr.—then at Betty. She opens her hand and holds up her lavalier, sobbing and telling him of her sad mistake. Boyle abashed, stares from lavalier to the bit of finery he holds. Betty again begs Cavendish to let her see the Countess. Cavendish hesitates—at last he assents and sends Soto to lead the way. Betty follows—Cavendish draws Boyle toward drawing room.

Scene 239.

Int. Countess' Bedroom

In her wonderful bed, Countess, magnificently gotten up in lace gown, etc., grinningly reads the paper—Jap maid comes running and warns her. Countess in panic, shrinks under covers. Maid whisks away paper—and then Betty comes timidly in, led by Soto, who sighs with relief as he sees Countess simulating extreme illness. Betty to bed.

Scene 240.

Int. Countess' Bedroom—(CLOSE-UP)

Countess on pillow—simulating desperate illness. Betty sinks beside her—Countess turns her head. Betty sobs and shows lavalier, in weeping confession of her mistake—then she drops her head on Countess' breast. Countess' eyes open wide over her head and she grins with huge relish of this—but she carefully moves her hand and puts it on Betty's head. Betty sobs and talks—Countess listens.

Scene 241.

Int. Countess' Hallway

Cavendish arguing with Boyle, who looks again at torn finery in his hand and is again suspicious. He wants to investigate the Countess. He insists upon going upstairs. Cavendish argues—but detective insists and starts. Cavendish desperate, goes with him.

Scene 242.

Int. Countess' Bedroom

Countess feigns to speak with difficulty at last—stops Betty's confession and, begging for forgiveness, she says:

112. Spoken Title:

"There's nothing to foahgive, my deah. Now let me—straighten this—tangle about Mr. Julian—while I have time!"

Betty starts and gasps—Countess quiets her with weak gesture—then says:

113. Spoken Title: "Julian saved my life—in Belgium—where we were together on—secret service foah the American government. The rings were—duplicate momentos!"
- Countess pauses and pants—then as Betty's head sinks a little abashed, Countess grins an instant and goes on:
114. Spoken Title: Foahgive a dying woman foah—intruding on youah affairs. But Saunders Julian—loves you—and you only!"
- Betty's head goes down again on the Countess' breast—Countess looks at her with tenderness, then off, with a half desperate shake of the head, as if "she" cannot stand this much longer—suddenly she starts and looks off.
- Scene 243.
- Int. Countess' Bedroom (SEMI CLOSE-UP)
- Boyle and Dr. come into bedroom door and stop—Boyle looks at Countess, half skeptical and suspicious, but he hesitates. Cavendish crowds past him, feigning much concern, and goes toward bed. Boyle slowly follows:
- Scene 244.
- Int. Countess' Bedroom—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)
- Countess in bed—Betty has turned to look as Cavendish comes in and bends over Countess—Betty draws up and away a step—Boyle comes in, half awed but still doubtful. Cavendish close over Countess.
- Scene 245.
- Int. Countess' Bedroom—(CLOSE-UP)
- Cavendish over Countess, shielding her from others—she looks up at him desperately, then grins daringly and whispers:
115. Spoken Title: "Here's where I croak, Doc!"
- Countess shuts her eyes, gasps and turns on pillow—Cavendish watches, almost losing his nerve for an instant—the looking off—Countess suddenly relaxes.
- Scene 246.
- Int. Countess' Bedroom—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)
- Cavendish turns slowly to Betty and Boyle—he shakes his head—looks back at Countess, then turns and says: "It's all over—she's gone!" Begins to urge them gently from the room.
- Scene 247.
- Int. Mrs. Vandergrift's Morning Room
- Mrs. Vandergrift at phone calling number.
- Scene 248.
- Int. Countess' Boudoir
- Jap maid answering phone. Cavendish, Betty and Boyle come from bedroom and Cavendish shuts door. Maid turns and calls Dr. to phone. Cavendish tells her to go to her dead mistress. Maid shows shock, then hurries to bedroom as Dr. takes phone. He listens, then gravely shakes his head and looks back toward bedroom as he says: "The Countess is dead!"
- Scene 249.
- Int. Mrs. Vandergrift's Morning Room
- Mrs. Van at phone shows shock. Asks question—exclaims with regret. Then suddenly she says:
116. Spoken Title: "Then, in decency's name, doctor, call off that detective! My necklace is—er—accounted for!"
- Mrs. Van phones and waits.
- Scene 250.
- Int. Countess' Boudoir
- Cavendish turns with phone and hands it to Boyle—says Mrs. Van wants to talk to him, etc. Boyle, wonderingly, takes it—(IRIS OUT).
117. Subtitle: The End of a Career of "Usefulness!"
- Scene 251.
- Int. Countess' Bedroom (IRIS IN)
- Julian on, in man's dress, with Cavendish, as Soto and other Japs are just depositing big pine box (somewhat like sort coffins are shipped in) on the floor. Statue in background. Soto pulls cover off box—it is half full of



excelsior—all regard it with interest. Julian jokingly suggests that it is for HIM—then they debate what to put into it. Suddenly Julian laughs and points to statue—he goes toward it.

Scene 252.

Int. Countess' Hallway

Jap butler just admitting Betty, with flowers. She explains that she comes with modest offering for casket, etc. Jap much worried, asks her to wait, and edges toward drawing room.

Scene 253.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room

Julian and others just dropping statue into box—it goes in, all but an arm. All laugh. Cavendish says it can't go. Julian says it must—he catches up a chair and breaks off the arm—chucking it into the box after the rest. Soto and other Jap start to put on cover. Jap butler comes in fearfully and to Julian.

Scene 254.

Int. Hallway

Betty hears sound in drawing room with astonishment—after an instant, with strange expression she goes that way.

Scene 255.

Int. Drawing Room

Japs have just put cover on box. Julian and Cavendish listen in dismay as butler tells them of Betty's presence in hallway and then Betty comes in. All stare. Julian presses forward anxiously.

Scene 256.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room (SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Betty stares at Julian—he stretches out a hand anxiously, but she turns from him and looks toward box in background. Then she ignores Julian and goes toward box with her flowers. Julian turns instantly and waves frantically past her to Cavendish near box to do something. Then Julian thinks, suddenly grins and whirls to and out door.

Scene 257.

Int. Drawing Room—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Beside the box, Cavendish greets Betty gravely. She speaks of putting the flowers on casket, etc. She looks down. Cavendish in great distress—looks off—fidgets—then quiets and tries to demur as Betty looks up.

Scene 258.

Int. Drawing Room—(SEMI CLOSE-UP)

Japs, as they stare and anticipate catastrophe.

Scene 259.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room

Betty looks up at Cavendish in wonder at his refusing her simple request. Suddenly she turns and commands him to open the box. He hesitates, looks at Cavendish. Cavendish is helpless—turns out his hands hopelessly. Soto lifts the cover. Betty bends, then suddenly starts and stares.

Scene 260.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room—(CLOSE-UP)

Face of statue with broken nose, in excelsior filled box.

Scene 261.

Int. Countess' Drawing Room

Betty amazed, rises erect and stares around. Then she turns on Cavendish and demands an explanation—but just then from door behind Betty comes Julian in Countess' wig and negligee—and Cavendish sees him, and, waving Betty to him, turns and beats it.

Scene 262.

Int. Drawing Room—(SEMI CLOSE-UP) Countess

Betty turns and sees Countess—stares—then half scared, as if she sees a ghost—Countess steps forward till only the box separates the two—then coolly lifts off wig and throws off kimono and stands forth as Julian—Betty gasps and drops flowers—then she demands of Julian:

Spoken Title: "Why did you do this?"

Julian hesitates—then grins—answers:

119. Spoken Title: "To make good your promise to the Red Cross and—to hand one honest wallop to the Vans!"  
Betty stares—then looks down at box—then up at him again—then at box—  
Julian looks at the box and then at the wig in his hand—he suddenly slams the wig into the box in supreme disgust and steps in upon it, treading it down on statue's face—then he says:
120. Spoken Title: "You CAN'T be jealous. I'm forever—IN DUTCH with the "DUTCH-ESS!"  
Betty looks up—she is smiling irrepressibly—Julian suddenly steps across to her, taking her hands eagerly. (IRIS OUT).

—FINIS—



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PART IV

GLOSSARY OF WORDS AND  
PHRASES USED IN  
PHOTOPLAY WRITING

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## CHAPTER I

### THE GLOSSARY

*It is important to note that the following terms are defined in relation to the photoplay, not according to their accepted meaning; therefore, in many instances, the definitions differ from the common usage of the terms. The meaning given is that prevalent in studios.*

\* \* \* \*

**ACTION**—The doings of the various characters, by which the plot is unfolded and the story told.

**ADAPTATION**—A photoplay taken from published fact or fiction.

**ANGLE-SHOT**—A view of a scene taken from a different angle.

**ART DIRECTOR**—A studio member who sees that art objects in a "set" are correctly handled.

**ATMOSPHERE**—Differently interpreted; usually meaning the local color surrounding a scene or play.

**AUXILIARY CHARACTER**—A minor character.

**BUNCH LIGHTS**—Clusters of incandescents used in photographing scenes.

**BUSINESS**—Author's instructions for a certain piece of acting.

**BUST**—Obsolete for close-up.

**"CAMERA"**—Just before the photographing of a scene begins, the Director calls "Camera," and the cameraman immediately gets everything ready for the beginning of the scene action, which opens when the director says "Shoot."

**CAMERA EYE**—Power of vizualization.

**CAPTION**—Obsolete for sub-title.

**CAST**—Abbreviation of Cast of Characters.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**—List of characters appearing in a play.

**CHARACTER**—One of the fictitious persons in a photoplay.

**CINEMATOGRAPHER**—The cameraman, who operates the motion picture camera.

**CLIMAX**—The highest point of interest and suspense, from which all action demands; the untying of the "major knot"; the supreme crisis of a play.

**CLOSE-UP**—Scene photographed with the camera close to the action.

**CONFLICT**—Antagonism of characters; conflict is the indispensable element of plot.

**CONTINUITY**—The succession of scenes, sub-titles and inserts, exactly as they are to be directed, acted and photographed.

**CONTINUOUS ACTION**—A scene in a single location acted by one set of characters; or action followed without interruption in a series of locations.

**COOPER-HEWITTS**—The mercury-vapor lamps used overhead in studios for interior scenes or night work. They give off a ghastly blue light making the face look swollen and purple in places.

**CRANK**—Meaning to photograph. See "Camera."

**CRANKING**—Photographing.

**CRANK-SPEED**—Speed at which the picture is to be photographed.

**CRISIS**—A critical moment in the development of a plot; a minor climax.

**CUT-BACK**—To return to a previous scene after introducing other scenes.

**CUT SCENE**—A scene shortened after being viewed in the projection room. Also instruction to stop camera.

**DENOUEMENT**—That portion of a plot following the major climax; the ending; the Explication.

**DESCRIPTIVE TITLE**—A sub-title explaining anything not shown in the plot.

**DIRECTOR**—One who oversees the production of a photoplay.

**DIRECTOR OF LOCATION**—One who finds suitable places throughout the country to be used as settings for plays.

**DISCOVER**—Meaning a character is "on" when a scene begins.

**DISSOLVE**—To blend one scene into another.

**DOUBLE EXPOSURE**—A positive picture made from two overlapped negatives.

**DREAM PICTURE**—An improbable play, finally explained by saying that it was all a dream.

**ENTER**—Entrance into a scene.

**EPISODE**—One section of a serial play.

**ESTABLISH**—To make clear the relation of one character to the others; or to register, in a broad sense, as, "establish" innocence, anger or jealousy.

**EXHIBITOR**—One who operates a motion picture theatre.

**EXIT, EXEUNT**—Former, one character passing out of a scene; latter, two characters doing the same thing.

**EXPLANATORY TITLE**—Sub-title clearing up a vague part of the plot.

**EXTERIOR**—Out-of-door setting.

**EXTRAS**—Actors or actresses engaged by the day to play minor parts.

**FACTION**—A set of characters working together for a common purpose.

**FADE**—Used in compound form: Fade-in and Fade-out; former, gradual appearance of a scene; latter, its gradual disappearance.

**FAKING**—Making the impossible seem possible.

**FEATURE**—An unusual subject generally; sometimes an ordinary subject unusually handled.

**FILM**—Three meanings: (1) A chemically sensitized piece of celluloid used in motion picture photography; (2) a photoplay; (3) to turn a scenario into a finished play.

**FILMING**—Producing a photoplay.

**FLASH**—Showing a scene or part of a scene on the screen for a moment.

**FRAME**—(1) Each single picture in a photoplay; a series of scenes following each other quickly make the pictures seem to "move"; (2) part of the camera used to exhibit a photoplay.

**FREE-LANCE**—A photoplay writer who submits his plays when and where he desires; not under contract with any one company.

**GESTURE**—Registering by action; opposed to facial expression.

**INSERT**—"Still" matter inserted in a play—not including a sub-title. Examples: letters, telegrams, newspapers, and the like.

**INTERIOR**—Scene supposed to take place in-doors.

**INTERPOSE**—Interrupt orderly procession of events.

**INTRODUCTORY TITLE**—Sub-title introducing a character.

**IRIS**—Diaphragm regulating the aperture of the camera lens.

**IRIS-IN**: Opening the iris of a scene. **IRIS-OUT**: Closing the iris on a scene.

**LABORATORY**—Department of studio, wherein films are made into plays for exhibition after being filmed.

**LEAD**—Principal part in a play.

**LEADER**—Obsolete for sub-title.

**LIGHTING**—Tinting a play to produce various night or day effects.

**LOCATION**—Place outside of a studio whereat a scene or number of scenes are photographed.

**LOCATION LIST**—Itemized statement of locations to be used in a particular play.

**LONG-SHOT**—A full view of a scene.

**MAIN TITLE**—Name of a play.

**MAT**—A plate put over a lense when a scene is photographed to produce the effect of looking through a key-hole, field glasses, and so on.

**MULTIPLE REEL**—A photoplay of more than one reel.

**NEGATIVE**—The exposed film run through the motion picture camera. The "positives" all are made from the one negative.



OFF—The reverse of "On."

ON—When a character is "in the picture," he is "on."

PAD—Inserting unnecessary matter in a play.

PAN OR PANORAMA—Moving the camera from side to side or up and down while a scene is being photographed.

PANTOMIME—Action by movement of the body or features to convey certain meanings.

PHOTO-DRAMATIST—Another term for photoplaywright.

PHOTOPLAY—A story told in pictured action.

PICTURE STORY—A photoplay.

PLOT—A complete idea elaborated into situations according to the rules of plot-building. In a broad sense, plot is the scheme, plan, argument or action of a photoplay.

PORTABLE LIGHTS—A rack of mercury lights which can be carried from one part of the studio to another.

POSITIVE—A film printed from a negative; the finished photoplay as used by exhibitors.

PRINCIPALS—The major actors or actresses in a photoplay.

PRODUCER—One who causes a manuscript to be turned into a photoplay; usually the financial head of a company.

PROJECTION MACHINE—Machine used by exhibitors to exhibit plays on the screen.

PROPS—Abbreviation of properties; the objects used in preparing "sets."

PROPERTY LIST—Itemized list of properties.

PUNCH—Action calculated to arouse strong emotions on the part of an audience.

READER—One who assists the scenario editor in looking over submitted manuscripts.

REEL—(1) Metal spool on which film is wound for exhibition; (2) approximately 1,000 feet of film.

REGISTER—To portray emotions of anger, hatred, etc.

RELEASE—A certain date on which a play is surrendered for exhibition.

RELEASE TITLE—The main title finally selected for a photoplay. (See working title)

RELIEF—Inconsequential action following a heavy dramatic scene.

RETAKE—Photographing an unsatisfactory scene a second time.

RETROSPECT—To revert to a former action.

SCENARIO—An outline of a photoplay describing in every detail the development of the plot exactly as it appears on the screen and showing all sub-titles and inserts.

SCENARIO EDITOR—Head of the scenario staff.

SCENARIO STAFF—Writers and readers of photoplays under employment of a film company.

SCENE—That portion of a play's action taken by the camera without stopping. A photoplay is made up of a series of scenes.

SCENE-PLOT—Itemized list of various scenes classified as "interiors" and "exteriors" for the convenience of the director.

SCREEN—The white surface on which films are exhibited.

SCRIPT—Abbreviation of manuscript; a complete photoplay in type-written form.

SEMI CLOSE-UP—A distant close-up or a close long-shot; "in between" a close-up and a long-shot.

SERIAL—A photoplay presented in installments.

SEQUENCE—A connected series of events.

SET—Arrangement of furniture, background, and the like, for a scene.

SHOOT—When the Director is ready for the Cameraman to begin photographing a scene, he exclaims "Shoot."

SILHOUETTE—Figure or figures outlined.

SITUATION—A temporary state of affairs at any point in the plot.

SLAPSTICK COMEDY—Comedy of a "rough" nature.

SLOW-CRANKING—Usually, when a picture is photographed, sixteen

frames are exposed to action per second. Often, however, only eight or twelve frames are photographed—called “cranking eight” or “twelve”—in order to make the action seem unusually fast when the picture is exhibited. This method is often used in comedies.

**SPECTACLE**—A photoplay containing a majority of gorgeous scenes. “Intolerance” a fine example.

**SPLIT REEL**—Approximately 1,000 feet of film containing more than one subject; split reels have gone out of vogue.

**SPOKEN TITLE**—A sub-title consisting of a quotation by a character.

**STAR**—A very well-known and popular player.

**STILL**—A photograph of a scene or a character in a play made with an ordinary camera. “Stills” are used for advertising purposes.

**STORY**—Plot.

**STRUGGLE**—The contention resulting from opposition in the plot.

**STUDIO**—The place where photoplays are made.

**STUNTS**—Extraordinary or hazardous effects, tricks or actions.

**SUB-TITLE**—A word, a phrase, or a sentence thrown on the screen during the action of a play.

**SUSPENSE**—The doubtful state of mind of the audience as to the outcome of events.

**SWITCH-BACK**—Same as cut-back.

**SYNOPSIS**—An abstract or summary of the plot.

**TECHNIQUE**—The skillful putting of an idea into proper form.

**TECHNICAL DIRECTOR**—One who is supposed to see that inconsistencies do not appear in the details of a set. A Technical Director would not allow electric lights to appear in a picture of '76.

**TELESCOPIC LENS**—Lens for long distance photography.

**THEME**—That which a plot is about.

**THRILLS**—Unique action, often spectacular, dangerous or unexpected.

**TIME ELAPSE**—A sub-title, or a fade-out, or a combination of both, indicating the passage of time.

**TINTING**—Passing daylight pictures through pale colors to give them special effects—night, fire, etc.—when shown on the screen.

**TRUCK-BACK**—The act of moving the camera back from the scene while it is being photographed.

**TRUCK-UP**—The reverse of Truck-Back.

**Vignette**—A close-up of a face or article.

**VISION**—The forming of mental actions not in the immediate scene.

**VISUALIZATION**—Forming mental pictures of how a scene will appear on the screen.

**WIDE-ANGLE LENS**—Specially wide-constructed lens for photographing scenes at short range.

**WORKING SCRIPT**—The manuscript used in a studio to produce a photoplay.

**WORKING TITLE**—The title of a photoplay used in the studio while the picture is being filmed. The working title may or may not be used as the play's final title. (See release title)

#### ABBREVIATIONS

Ex.—Exit

Ent.—Enter

c. u.—Close-up

Bus.—Business

Ms. or Script—Manuscript

Pan.—Panorama

Disc.—Discover

m. g.—Middleground

f. g.—Foreground

b. g.—Background

Int.—Interior

Ext.—Exterior

Props.—Properties



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PART V

THE EASY WAY TO CHOOSE  
YOUR OWN FIELD OF  
WRITING AND WORK  
SUCCESSFULLY

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Webster tells us that talent is either natural or acquired ability, and the same thought has been crystalized by a noted writer into the well-known maxim, "Genius is the capacity for taking infinite pains." So, if you long to find expression for the ideas or information or plots crowding your brain, or if you feel that you have a message to give your fellow-man, there is absolutely no reason why you should not do it successfully, provided you set about the task systematically and intelligently.

In every locality there are remarkable characters who might well be written up, either for the inspiration or warning of others. There are historical spots, odd freaks of nature, great industrial plants, unique undertakings, about which others would be glad to know. Perhaps the people about you are peculiar to themselves, having retained their individuality in spite of the ebb and flow of the tide of events about them.

It is out of just such material as this that Mary Wilkins Freeman created her New England types which have brought us so near to the heart of the life they portray; Irving Bacheller has given us the people of the North country as he sees them; men with an especially observing eye, like Frank Carpenter, have traveled far afield to tell us about the world and its people. Undoubtedly your particular neighborhood holds treasures of material which have never been unearthed and may long remain undiscovered, unless you or someone else with an active and resourceful mind will present them to the public in attractive and readable form.

A young lady who lived in a city of some fifty thousand people, felt that she could write, provided she knew what to write about. It was true that she had considerable facility of expression and the faculty of apt and graphic word portrayal. She needed money and sighed for the opportunity to travel in order that she might have something to write about.

A strange young woman came to that town to spend a few months for her health. Before she had been there a week, she had closed a contract with one of the daily newspapers to write a "Know Your Own City" series. In this, the early history of the settlement was written up; its growth traced; its manufacturing plants described and featured; its schools, hospitals, churches, municipal heating plant, and social service work were all taken in turn; prominent people connected with each were given appreciative mention; other individuals whose lives were linked with the nation's history were given recognition. In fact, that series became the feature of an entire winter, and the material was later collected into a book, which enjoyed an excellent local sale. The young woman paid all her expenses and made a tidy sum besides.

The first girl mentioned might have done the same, and, being a native of the place, could have done it with less effort than the stranger. It is a modern translation of the old story of the man who sold his little home and went forth to seek his fortune. He searched the world in vain, finally returning to discover that his successor had found a diamond mine beneath and around the very house where he had lived in such discontent. From this soil was taken the famous Kohinoor and others of the world's most famous gems.

What material is lying about you undiscovered? Everywhere there is treasure, whether it be on the stretches of the desert, in silent mountain fastnesses, or the crowded city. You do not need to fare forth in search of adventure until you have exhausted what is near at hand.

There are as many different lines of writing as there are individual human interests, so no one need be bound to any particular form of writing for which he is not fitted. It is repeatedly said that there is nothing new under the sun. In materials and fundamental facts, no; in management and presentation, yes.

Do you remember the kaleidoscope of your childhood? There were little pieces of brightly-hued glass at one end of the tube, and an eye-hole with a magnifying lens at the other. The little pieces of glass could be shaken into different patterns. The possibilities of arrangement were endless, although it was the same pieces of glass which each time produced the new pattern.

Thus it is with facts. You and I can go on and on forever, rearranging and delighting without ever duplicating, if we are willing to use the time necessary and to take the infinite pains essential for good work. A masterpiece may be dashed off in an hour, but work that will live is not usually produced in that way. As a wise man once remarked, "It takes only a few weeks to grow a squash but a hundred years to produce an oak tree."

Every worth while field of writing renders a valuable service, and every individual field of writing is capable of intensive cultivation. An ignorant farmer may make a poor living off several hundred acres, while the man who understands just how has been known to make a good livelihood off a piece no larger than a table top.

There is a business maxim which the writer will do well to remember, as it sums the financial part of the work up in a nutshell. "He who serves best profits most." Good, better, best! Do not be satisfied with remaining stationary at the first or second landing. Whatever writing field you choose to work in, strive to become so skilled, so thoroughly acquainted with it as it is, and to have so clear a vision of what it ought to be that you can render expert service and thus be entitled to the honest commendation of the word—"Best," by the Great Editor of the Universe.

Do not be satisfied with "Good enough," or "Well enough." Remember, "The good is enemy to the best." Strive to be, even in small things, "A workman approved." Then, and only then, will you merit the final acceptance, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."



## CHAPTER II

### THE WRITER, HIS METHODS, AND HIS EQUIPMENT

While the writer should always aim toward doing the best work of which he is capable, this does not mean that he should despise the day of small beginnings. Better work to-morrow can only be accomplished upon the foundation of good work, carefully finished to-day.

It is not unusual to meet a beginner who says, "I do not care to consider the preparation of short articles or unimportant stories. My idea is to write something that will be worthy of the highest class literary periodicals of the day." This is a worthy aim, but an unwise mental attitude likely to lead to disappointments and possibly to utter discouragement. It is as if the musical student without knowledge of notes or time should remark, "I do not wish to spend any time on unimportant details. I prefer to be a Paderewski at once."

The writer who would succeed must be physically fit. We are told of men and women who have succeeded in spite of great physical handicaps—Stevenson, Byron, Poe, and others. These individuals were exceptional, and what they might have accomplished, had the best of health been theirs, will never be known. The writer must eat sanely and temperately if the system is to function properly and the brain to be clear and alert. Indulgence in a single bad habit is likely to undermine success, for you cannot serve in the most efficient way, unless you are not only clear-brained, clear-eyed, but clean-souled as well. The public is becoming more and more discriminating, and it demands that every message, no matter where given or how, shall ring true.

As the writer's work is sedentary, a regular amount of physical exercise is necessary. An hour spent in the open air may or may not be particularly beneficial, depending upon the mental attitude and bodily poise of the individual. A slouching gait, rounded shoulders, or purposeless meandering, will not amount to much mentally or physically. If, however, the writer will set aside a certain regular period every day for brisk, out-of-door exercises; will stand with the body in a perpendicular line from the ball of the foot to the hip and the point of the shoulder, being careful not to let the spine sag as he walks, breathing deeply as he goes, and rejoicing he is alive, he will gain much.

Such exercise should not be wholly purposeless, for the mind must be pleasantly occupied. The writer should go forth to gain a fact, to execute an errand, to observe exactly how nature looks and acts under given circumstances, or for some definite purpose, if only to have a good time. He will then return to his desk refreshed and invigorated.

The work of the writer is of a nerve-trying nature as it calls for close concentration. The nerve cells of the body are best filled up



and renewed by drinking plenty of water daily, by having an abundance of fresh air, and by an abstemious but nourishing diet.

To do a good day's work should be the aim of every writer. Some set themselves a certain daily task and do not stop until one, two, or three thousand words, as the case may be, have been completed; others work as the inspiration seizes them; still others sit down quietly for half an hour every morning, and carefully plan out the work of the next day, deciding what ought to be done and what must have first attention. The latter method usually brings excellent results; it prevents random work and the neglect of definite, timely effort.

Regular hours of sleep are exceedingly necessary for the writer, and, while some may do better work at night or very early in the morning, yet these things are largely a matter of habit, and working hours should be arranged and co-ordinated with sleeping hours so as to keep the physical fitness of the worker always at par.

It is a mistake for the writer to live constantly within confining walls, or to grind at his desk continually without seeking inspiration. To succeed he needs personal, four-square development.

(1) The best quality of work cannot be done without physical well-being.

(2) Real progress and mental development require that he may profit by contact with the great minds of all time through the printed page.

(3) To write about life accurately, one must know life, and so the social side must not be neglected.

(4) The writer, above all others, should be able to perceive and appreciate the unselfish, the altruistic, and the vision of human possibility and divine love. To neglect one's spiritual development may condemn to utter superficiality.

There are those who sigh, "No one knows how I long to write, but I fear I lack sufficient education."

Education is relative. By some it is gained in schools and universities, by others in Life's University of Experience. There are those who have had the advantage of rare academic opportunities, yet who lack the faculty of telling what they know to others. There are men and women writers of note who know no language but their mother tongue and a part of whose education has been gained through reading and study when the regular day's work was done.

Education is an advantage, of course, unless it makes one a slavish imitator of others—then it ceases to be education and becomes bookishness.

If you have a message for others, give it honestly, clearly, and with telling directness, being careful to verify your facts and to advance no weakening theory. Ideas are more important than the mere dress in which they are clothed. There are many more who can groom and polish than there are who can create. Education is not to be minimized, but a reasonable amount can be acquired by those who are sufficiently in earnest. Education must be of the perceptions and of the heart, however, as well as of the head.

Everyone who essays to write should have some place devoted to the work; for, while it is possible to take notes anywhere, we become

more or less creatures of habit and do our best work in the spot which is so familiar that we become unconscious of our surroundings and readily absorbed in the work in hand. Most people can do better work in a place where interruptions are few; others have developed their power of concentration to a point where they can write in a city newspaper office with the click of typewriters and the clang of heavy presses in their ears. But there is no gainsaying the fact that writing and thinking against continuous noise is a much greater nervous strain than writing amid quiet surroundings.

An elaborate equipment is not necessary. Every writer should have a roomy desk, the books and magazines devoted to the craft, some sort of a simple filing system, a typewriter, good light for night and day, and the means of good ventilation and temperature regulation suitable to the time of year. As far as possible, the writer's surroundings should be such as to give him no concern or thought. Discomfort distracts the mind; reasonable comfort is an economy.

A good typewriter of standard make, fresh, clear ribbons, good paper, and carefully prepared work are necessary that manuscripts may compete successfully in attractive appearance with others in the editorial office. A carelessly prepared manuscript, or one showing many corrections, is a poor business proposition. The salesman who would approach his customers with soiled linen and shoes run down at the heel, with unshaven face and untrimmed hair, might save in personal expense, but would limit his income decidedly. "There is an economy that tendeth to poverty." It is better business to have a manuscript typewritten by someone capable of doing it well, than to send it forth indifferently prepared.

No one should be discouraged, however, who cannot have everything at once. We must learn to do the best we can with what we have, always remembering that the main thing is to have original ideas to offer. To know what we want to do, to fix our eyes determinedly on the goal, and to work persistently toward that end, is sooner or later to accomplish our purpose. We can have what we want if we want it earnestly and persistently enough.

In preparing manuscripts only one side of the paper should be used. The regular typewriter sheet, eight and one-half by eleven inches, is the most favored size. The name and address should be written in the upper left-hand corner of the first page, the number of words—if a story or article—noted in the upper right-hand corner, and the remark "Usual Rates" directly underneath this. About one-third way down, write the title, spacing it accurately in the middle of the page and using all capitals. If a *nom de plume* is used, it is written under the title and separated from it by the word "By." Editors do not favor *nom de plumes* as they complicate the task of office bookkeeping. An author endeavoring to build up a reputation should send out work he will be willing to own, so that his prestige may be steadily cumulative. A *nom de plume* is the mark of the amateur.



Here is the correct way to begin your manuscript.

JOHN HENRY BROWN,  
25 Allen Ave.,  
Marytown, Texas

2,000 Words  
Usual Rates

## COUNTER CURRENTS

By  
George Ross England

Further pages of the manuscript should be numbered in the center of the page at the top. To avoid loss of pages, or confusion in case they are separated, it is a good idea to write the title at the top of each succeeding page following the first. Thus, the title "Counter Currents" will appear in the center of the first page and at the top of the other pages.

Manuscripts are preferably folded twice to fit an envelope of legal size. They are never rolled and are clumsy if folded once. Two sizes of envelopes should be kept. The smaller size should take in the twice-folded, typewritten sheet easily and should bear the name and address of the sender, together with stamps enough to bring the manuscript back in case it is rejected. The outside envelope should be large enough to take in the return envelope and the manuscript and yet leave at least an inch to spare at the end. The envelope sizes known as No. 10 and No. 11 fill this description. The outer envelope is addressed as follows:

JOHN HENRY BROWN,  
No. 25 Allen Ave.,  
Marytown, Texas.

Editorial Department,  
MOUNTAIN AND VALLEY MAGAZINE,  
4 High Park,  
Surrey City, Okla.

The manuscript should not be slipped into the return envelope, but the two placed side by side in the larger envelope. The outside envelope should bear in the upper left-hand corner the address of the sender and be fully stamped for FIRST CLASS delivery. It is not necessary to send a letter to the editor, unless some special information relative to the manuscript is necessary.

A small but accurate postal scale is a great convenience, for then the correct number of stamps may be enclosed for return. A manu-





Not only is it wise to study the policy of different magazines and studios, but it is well to have a general knowledge of the different classes of markets, so that we may know at once where an experience, an anecdote, a write-up, a story, or a photoplay will likely find a welcome. Many individuals pass quantities of good material daily simply because they do not realize there is a place for it. It is not to be expected that any one writer will become acquainted with all of the field, or even a small part of it at once, but the acquaintance may be steadily broadened until the leading publications in a definite field at least are known.

Do not ask an editor for criticisms, or reasons for rejection. Editors are busy men. They are paid to perform the regular duties of their offices, and not to furnish a free course of instruction to those who choose to ask for it. If a kindly disposed executive happens to make a suggestion because he sees promise in your work, take it kindly, and, above all things, heed it! Such a suggestion has been offered in a wholly disinterested manner and for your good. Do not besiege such an editor with letters for further help, or he will rue the day he was tempted to give any advice at all.

Even the reading of an extra letter may be the last straw in an overcrowded day. Be fair. If you want and need advice, pay someone to furnish it. You would not ask the jeweler or the hardware man for any part of his stock free. Time and knowledge are two valuable commodities. Apply to someone who can advise and help you, who makes a business of it, and pay for the advice cheerfully, as you would pay your doctor or lawyer. If the literary helper can put his finger on the weak spot in your composition, and so make it worth a good price, also helping you to do stronger work in the future, you can figure for yourself whether the service paid for has been an expense or an investment.

### CHAPTER III

## HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR OWN FIELD OF WRITING

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*Note.*—In the following list of subjects, the author has not treated of stories and photoplays. The demand for both is too great to be talked about. The purpose of the following is to direct the beginner's attention to the innumerable ways of utilizing ideas—in addition to story and photoplay writing—the many little by-paths of profitable authorship, generally unknown by the beginner.

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*Agricultural Writing.*—There is a surprising number of agricultural publications in the country, almost every state in the Union being represented by many of merit. These are ably edited and contain material of a practical nature written in a direct and convincing manner. Farm papers do not care for fine writing, but they do want facts plainly told, and helpful, inspirational articles. These papers are steady buyers and use a large amount of material.

If you can raise poultry successfully; have discovered a particular rotation of crops which does not exhaust the land; have found some easy way of doing a necessary farm task; can offer an interesting experience in relation to stock raising; have discovered how to protect your fruit from the birds and market it to advantage; have learned how to secure the greatest number of pounds of butter from each cow; have successfully drained a swampy piece of land or irrigated an arid portion; have any experience to offer in grain raising, vegetable growing, or any other agricultural subject, write about it.

If the experience or knowledge is not personal, but you have met someone who is possessed of such knowledge or experience, or you have observed the successful methods of others, collect the essential details. Tell your story clearly and interestingly, and, if the ideas are sound and have not been published, they will find a market.

In addition to the subjects already outlined, general articles which have a point of contact with farm conditions will be welcomed, such as the relation of the rural church to local prosperity, road building, shade trees in the country, electrically lighting country homes, water works on the farm, sanitary out houses, unique Grange activities, sweetening sour soil, spraying fruit trees, removing stumps from newly cleared land, making use of old stone fences, tracing a typhoid epidemic, modern maple sugar making, marketing exchange information, agricultural college extension work, and so on.

Most of the agricultural papers have household departments. The material used is similar to that of the women's publications, only it is



developed from the standpoint of the woman on the farm. Practical labor saving ideas, child training, cookery, fancy work and sewing suggestions, entertainment plans for church, school and home affairs, and suitable fiction, will all find a ready place.

*Anecdotal Material.*—Anecdotes relating to people prominent in the public eye—literary folk, politicians, society figures, artists, stars and educators—will find a ready sale, provided the anecdotes are authentic. Anecdotes relating to the success or failure of well-known businesses or people, anecdotes containing a suggestive point for others, can all be placed in an appropriate medium if original and striking. Humorous anecdotes are in especial demand.

*Animal Life.*—Accounts of wild life, especially if accompanied by pictures, make interesting reading. We have a few well-known animal writers, but there is a vast fund from which to draw material—the life of the sea, of the air, of the fresh water streams, of the mountain, and of the earth. Many of our most interesting myths and legends spring from nature tales having to do with animal life.

Children are always interested in well-told nature stories. The trap-door spider, the sea pansy, the sea cow, the habits of bees and ants, the doings of an interesting pet pony or goat, or even the everyday dog and cat, all give usable material.

The show that this field is not over-crowded, it might be mentioned that a well-known New York editor recently wrote to the writer of this paragraph, asking that a certain little nature story concerning an ordinary robin, of which he had heard in a round-about way, might be traced out and written for his magazine.

Is there a bird which regularly builds its nest near your home? What about that mother robin which would not continue her domestic arrangements when you moved her nest from directly under the eaves? Have you a fine globe of gold fish? How do you care for them? Is your canary bird healthy and happy? What do you feed it? Have any of your pets betrayed striking intelligence? Do you live in some part of the country where there are animals indigenous to that region?

A picture of yourself with that string of fish may sell to an outdoor magazine of some kind, provided you tell just how you caught the fish; or to a railroad company to use in a folder to advertise the fishing grounds to which its steel road will carry the pleasure seeker. Enjoy an outing this summer and pay yourself for doing it, not only in health and pleasure, but in cash as well.

*Automobile Articles.*—With millions of dollars invested in power vehicles and the machinery with which to produce them, it is to be expected that many publications will be devoted to this and allied interests. Some of the popular magazines have even recognized this demand by starting departments for the instruction of drivers of motor cars.

Articles dealing with practical just-how helps; the encouragement of good roads and good feeling among drivers; articles intended to familiarize people with the mechanical principles involved; technical articles describing proposed improvements; and fiction reflecting automobile situations and figures in a pleasing, entertaining manner, or

showing the advantages of automobiles for all sorts of uses, will serve a purpose.

If you are fortunate enough to ride much during the coming season, you may turn a single experience into cash enough to cover the season's expenses. Scan the pages of automobile and power publications and observe the type of the occasional automobile article or story that has received editorial sanction; and, knowing what has been found suitable, you will know better where to place your own offerings of this kind.

*Baby-Welfare Literature.*—This is said to be the age of the child. Better Baby Campaigns, Baby Weeks, and Infant Welfare Stations are familiar terms. This is not a passing fad. Far-seeing individuals are coming to realize the importance of properly caring for babies and training them in a scientific manner. If anything interesting has been done in your community to promote the welfare of the child, write it up; get photographs if you can, especially of the prize winners. Sunday papers with a local circulation and suitable periodicals will be interested.

Experience articles having to do with the care, feeding and training of the child are especially welcome. Observation of what others do and fail to do will give many suggestions. If a note-book is at hand, ideas for articles of this nature may often be gleaned on a railroad journey, a street car ride, or while waiting to be served in a store.

There is a large amount of baby literature furnished by the State and Federal governments which may be had for the asking. Physicians, trained nurses with hospital experience in the care of children, and others who may have made a special study have written exhaustively on the subject. It is well to have a little knowledge of what others have offered in this line that you may add your own experience or present the subject from a different angle. It is necessary, also, to keep in touch with up-to-date ideas on the care of the child.

There is a marked tendency of late to call attention to the parental responsibility of the father as well as the mother and to emphasize the importance of right habit formation during early years. Household periodicals, magazines intended especially for the mother, women's departments in agricultural and religious publications, use material of this type.

*Back-of-the-Book Articles.*—Write-ups of about a thousand words in length, dealing with topics in which women are specially interested, are used by some household publications in the last pages of the magazine. These fill up unused pages to advantage and are longer than the straight "filler." Sometimes the contributors are directed to address such material to the Back-of-the-book Editor, so that it will come to the notice of the right department.

Back-of-the-book material may deal with beauty subjects, points of etiquette, health, or anything of a suitable personal nature. Current events, or subjects dealing with general affairs or conditions, are not favored for this class of material.

In scanning a number of periodicals, the following subjects have been approved for use by the Back-of-the-book Editor, catchy titles being given to the thousand word articles: "The Proper Care of



Jewelry," "Family Loyalty," "Preventing Wrinkles," "Acquiring the Fashionable Figure," "How I Appropriate my Allowance," "My Daughter's Friends," etc., etc.

*Boy Material.*—Material intended for boy readers automatically divides itself into types suitable for the different ages of development. There are publications devoted to the little boy, the half-grown lad, and the adolescent youth.

The small boy must depend upon an older person to read to him. So the material offered should meet the needs of his life at this time—suggestive stories of simple games, rainy-day occupations, simple constructive work, and stories which, without having an obvious moral, promote kindness to animals, thoughtfulness, and other desirable characteristics. Such tales are best limited to from five to eight hundred words, as a young child's attention cannot be held long.

The offerings for the half-grown boy must show him interesting things to do, point out how he can excel his companions, and magnify general agility. This is the age when the child is a competitor, and he likes to conquer alone; consequently, he will be interested in stories dealing with people of strength and courage, even if they are older than himself. Hero tales appeal. The boy of this age also heartily enjoys the right kind of biography and adventure. He is an experimenter, so tell him what to do and how to do it.

The older boy of adolescent years will be interested in scientific facts, wood craft, team play, and the means by which his group may excel, or his club win a victory. Stories for this age must recognize this instinct of community spirit which manifests itself at this age, and emphasize the normal boy's admiration for fair play. The story of athletic games, boarding-school adventures, and camping groups are not staged at this age by accident. There is a purpose underlying their presentation at this time. The boy begins to live in an ideal world, starts to day dream, and so respects the real achievements of his elders. The attraction of the sexes begins to be felt. The boy demands a reason for everything, so loves argument. His sense of humor is keen. Literature prepared for him should recognize all these facts.

In addition to this, he will take a little instruction on conduct, if it is sugar-coated; but he does not enjoy moralizing, and will promptly resent too direct teaching. Stories must teach their own lesson by the outcome of the facts recounted, rather than by a moral tacked on at the end. The same is largely true of the article dealing with conduct and the social graces. A story showing the advantages of these things in the life of one or more characters will have far more influence than a straight essay on the subject.

*Business-Building Material.*—There are a number of important publications devoted to business building along general lines. These do not confine themselves to promoting the interests of any one trade or profession. Their columns are open to accounts of short cuts, practical business methods, descriptions of economical equipment, or anything that will help men to bigger business, greater profits, or worth while economies.



The business article that gets across does not deal in vague generalities. It is specific. It tells "how," "why," or "when." It may deal with the business man himself, with his plant, his employees, his trade-getting system, or any one of a thousand other topics. Some of the brightest minds of the time are devoted to business building; for, without stable business conditions, the prosperity of the country cannot continue. Such publications may use an occasional piece of fiction dealing with a business situation. Then there is a different type of publication of which the American Magazine is probably the leader. High-class business fiction and general articles of an entertaining, as well as an instructive, nature are offered. The appeal is purposely very broad, and the influence of legislation and of general economic conditions, as effected business, are considered. In fact, a first-class business story written in an entertaining manner has the right of way with many publications, and the prices paid for them are most generous.

*Children's Publications.*—The many needs of children are recognized in a number of magazines devoted to their interests and by special departments in general publications. The magazine that appeals especially to children has a definite policy. It may be prepared for the tiny tots and contain suitable stories, games, rhymes, pictures, and rebus material; or it may be addressed to the slightly older child who can appreciate occasional instructive write-ups, longer stories, interesting biographies, entertainment and occupational suggestions. Nature material, special day articles having to do with patriotism, and seasonable themes are sure to be included. Some of these magazines are published for boys only, others for girls, and still others for both boys and girls.

The children's departments in the household publications usually contain a little juvenile fiction, an opportunity to correspond with the one in charge, or to enter contests of some instructive nature. Puzzles, epigrams, enigmas, acrostics, and puzzle pictures are often used. The agricultural papers recognize the need of the children by including fiction and games prepared from the standpoint of the child on the farm. Some of the educational magazines are interested in poems, sketches, stories, and dialogues which can be used for program purposes or read to the children by the teacher in connection with a lesson in history, geography, good manners, and so forth.

The publications issued weekly for the various ages of boys and girls by the different church boards offer excellent examples of the class of material they desire, and it will be observed that most of these articles have an approximate word limit.

The writer for children must be in sympathy with them and be able to see with their eyes as well as with grown-up vision. Children like action, and are not interested by description. That is one reason why the moving picture so appeals to them.

Samples of the different publications should be studied. Some have a fixed rule which prohibits the use of ghost, Indian, or fairy stories; others do not like talking animals, or the element of love between the sexes; while others state frankly that none of these things used in the right way are in the least objectionable to them. Slang and the use

of incorrect English may only be used in the most limited way to depict a particular type of character. Editors are careful not to print on their pages that to which careful mothers will object.

Special booklets for children are issued in connection with a large number of manufactured articles. One recently noted recounted the life and death struggles between the Army of the Teeth and the Troops of General D. K. Germ. General Carelessness also took a part. Of course, a certain worthy mouth antiseptic was featured as the First Aid Corps of the Health Army. Children reading this would be entertained and instructed on the importance of mouth cleanliness. Such booklets are in the nature of advertising especially directed to young people.

Even among children's periodicals there are distinctly class publications intended to foster a particular interest, such as: Missions, Boy Scout work, Camp Fire Girl activities, and so on. Rainy day games, short plays, folk lore, simplified mythology, and accounts of what real boys have actually done will find a place. In writing for children and young people, make the teaching positive instead of negative. Editors favor stories that tell what to do, rather than what not to do.

*Church Publications.*—Religious publications divide themselves into three distinct classes. First, those intended for the student or the teacher in the Sunday School, or Bible School, as it is now more generally called. These contain material helpful in the preparation of the week's lesson and special articles with the psychology of youth, definite methods, or subjects of evangelistic appeal.

Secondly, publications containing interesting reading matter. These are known as story papers, to be distributed among the young people of the Sunday School each week. The material is selected with a view to being both helpful and entertaining.

The third class is devoted largely to reportorial work of the denomination, to public problems, and moral issues. Some of these magazines maintain a department devoted to matter dealing with child training, approved amusements, accounts of successful uplift work, and possibly fiction carrying out the editorial policy. In addition to this, there is editorial comment on current events, and suggestive matter for the young people's societies of the church. Each church has a group of such publications as its own. Work done for them must be carefully executed as the readers are people of education, including ministers and college professors, not to mention the well-to-do church families.

It will be seen that a wide latitude is allowed the writer for church publications, always provided, of course, that he understands the particular ethical point of view from which such articles must be written. Among the characteristics necessary for successful work in this field, are definite knowledge, breadth of vision, and sincerity.

*Department Work.*—Regular departments relating to gardening, the care of the baby, food preparation, finance, investment opportunities, and the like are placed in the hands of those considered authorities on the subject. A specially strong article along a popular line may open the door to department service, showing the writer to be thoroughly in touch with the facts of that particular field.



Many of the agricultural as well as the general publications maintain special columns. The work is pleasant and may be planned for well in advance. It can be done beneath the writer's home roof, the work going back and forth to the editorial office by mail.

If you know a great deal about the raising of poultry, the planting of bulbs, the decoration of a home, the drawing of architectural plans, the law relating to business problems, or any other topic in which many people are interested, you are likely to receive a respectful hearing if you apply for a department position and are able to show that you can make your knowledge clear to others. Even if an opening does not exist at the time, your name will be on file for future consideration.

In connection with many of these departments, a special service is given to the readers, either free or for a small charge. That is, letters of inquiry may be written and advice gained through the magazine department or from personal letters of advice. Service work of this kind takes much of the writer's time as only conscientious work is permissible, but it brings a vast fund of human interest material to the writer, broadens his knowledge of people, and deepens his sympathies as perhaps nothing else can.

*Essays.*—The writer of essays has a somewhat limited market, for an essay must approach the special article type to find much of a hearing for itself. To be sure, there are a few publications dealing with the didactic essay. These are principally religious and expository magazines intended for a class of readers educated along a certain line. Satirical, whimsical, and epigrammatic essays will find a place if brief and sparkling. Some of the standard publications reserve a place for these in a special department at the back of the book. Others plan to use a single short essay on a literary or humorous subject in each issue. Some of the humorous magazines use a special type of essay material dealing with some public issue. These are mostly of a ridiculous nature and intended to furnish a sort of vaudeville turn in the entertainment program.

*Fancy Work.*—Besides the periodicals devoted wholly to lace making, needle work, china painting, leather work, and the like, most of the household magazines and departments also use this material. A very little skill in drawing will sometimes serve to illuminate or at least to convey the idea clearly enough that the magazine artists can picture the article described.

Easter and Christmas seasons call for gift making and large quantities of fancy work suggestions and illustrations. To be in time, material should be submitted from four to six months ahead of publication. The previous spring months are a good time to make holiday offerings. The smaller publications and weeklies use material at a later date.

Care should be taken not to send anything already featured, or lacking in novelty, usefulness, and beauty. The directions should be so plainly given as to be easily comprehended. Let such material stand a few days; then read it again, to see if it can be condensed or made plainer.

Publications devoted to the millinery trade use articles dealing with the making of fancy ribbon flowers and simple novelties. Fashion

magazines are on the alert for unique and beautiful hand-made trimming suggestions. Some of the large manufacturers of embroidery silks have use for illustrated write-ups featuring articles made from their supplies.

*Food Magazines and Cookery Departments.*—There are several publications dealing with the better understanding of food, its purchase, care, preparation, and service. Material for these must be along the lines followed by the magazines in selection. Even the stories and general articles must have a point of contact with food, cookery, or service. Articles dealing with economy methods are especially popular.

The household and agricultural publications maintain departments for the home, in which similar material is used. Tested recipes and clear-cut photographs of prepared dishes are likely to find a place. Some of the larger publications have cookery editors who test recipes sent in to find whether they are practical and if the ingredients are rightly combined.

Articles dealing with food for children, the school lunch, balanced rations for the home table, food for the sick, for convalescents; menus for special seasons of the year, for entertainment purposes, and special occasions are suitable; also tested methods, informative articles concerning food manufacture and preservation, such as the manufacture of maple sugar; storing eggs for winter use; accounts of simple home tests of pure foods—all are wanted.

Almost every housewife has some pet method of doing something well, or knows someone who excels in some department of home management. Why not cash in on this valuable knowledge and give others the benefit of it as well? In this field the practical, tested article has the right of way, and justly so, as theory may sound all right on paper but may not work out in every-day use.

How to care for table linen, silver, glass; food customs in different lands; formal and informal luncheons and dinners and wedding repasts; holiday entertainment plans with menus that carry out color schemes; articles that show how to entertain in a crowded space; and the use of new accessories all are suitable topics for discussion.

*Garments and Accessories.*—Everyone is interested in the question of raiment. Plans for the making of new clothing, economy in remodelling, the utilization and combination of different materials, directions for home dyeing, bleaching, and renovating are constantly met on the printed page for the reason that the question, "Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" is ever present.

The expectant mother is eager to know how to plan the layette for the new baby; the mother with a family wants to learn how others solved the problem of comfortable, stylish dressing at reasonable cost for the growing youngsters.

The home dressmaker welcomes information on how to give her work a finished appearance, and the skilled dressmaker scans the pages of the current publications for fashion hints and practical ideas. The making of dainty underwear, embroidering of sheer garments, and the shaping of utility articles for gift purposes and home use will always be topics of interest.



Household publications, magazines for mothers, home and family departments, and newspapers use this class of material. The newspaper articles are generally supplied by syndicates, but back of the syndicate must be the writer.

*Girl's Publications.*—There are a number of periodicals devoted wholly to the interests of girls. These should be studied individually, as most of them make a clear-cut appeal to a particular age. The periodical for the very little ones will deal with boys and girls as play-mates, but stories intended for the girl of from six to twelve should only take boys into account in a minor way; for, at this age, the sexes are repellant. Stories dealing with individual achievement and private ownership meet a need of this age. The girl longs for her own books, her own room, her own chums.

Stories prepared for a girl from twelve to seventeen will take into account her influence on her group of friends and the influence of her friends on her. Articles having to do with the social graces, as an expression of kindness of heart, are constructive. The older girl begins to appreciate self-sacrifice and to rejoice in overcoming obstacles. This is the development of the maternal instinct.

Stories dealing with a girl or a family, and appearing as a series, are rather more popular with girls than with boys, for the reason that the girl idealizes her real and her mental companions.

Many publications not wholly devoted to girls, but rather directed to the whole family, incorporate one or two girl stories regularly in each issue. You can look for them with certainty in a special part of the publication. Such stories should be seasonable, and, while making the fine, womanly type of girl the heroine, should not fail to depict her as natural and fun loving.

*Household Efficiency.*—Articles dealing with better household management, a careful apportionment of expenses, economy of time and effort, and anything interesting to the housewife, or calculated to help her do a better day's work and do it easier, to feed her family more satisfactorily, to manage her children more easily, clothe them more acceptably, or to gain for herself a clearer idea of the importance of her task, will give the nucleus of a helpful article.

*Humorous Stuff.*—Original jokes, witty anecdotes, humorous stories, good-natured satires, parodies, and amusing monologues are issued by publications devoted wholly to fun-making, as well as by regular departments in standard publications and as fillers in many other magazines. Each joke or anecdote should be written on a separate sheet of paper, properly prepared, as one of a group may be accepted and the rest rejected. The humorous monologue often finds a market with the publisher of entertainment material.

*Relating to Education.*—More interest is being taken in schools and educational methods to-day than ever before. Visual education and vocational guidance have won distinct places for themselves. Articles having to do with schoolroom methods, with securing the co-operation of parents and teachers, with improving school and community conditions, are welcomed by educational publications.

Accounts of Parent-Teachers' Associations and their achievements find a place in club chronicles. When it is remembered that within

the last two years the number of Parent-Teachers Associations has doubled, and trebled in some parts of the country, it will be seen that a steadily increasing number of people are interested in representative activities.

New and unusual teaching methods are sure to be exploited. A great deal of space was given to the Montessori method, and, from time to time, the experiences of individual parents and teachers, who have done unusual things along pioneer trails, are encountered.

If there is a school in your vicinity, or a teacher, or a parent using unique methods and meeting with success, or if you know of a Club that has done something out of the ordinary, you have material that can be turned into cash if not already exploited. Educational and household publications are both markets for articles of this nature. Naturally, the write-up has to be prepared in a little different manner if intended for a body of educators or for general readers, the latter being only concerned with principles and results, rather than with means of securing results.

*Scientific Articles.*—Scientific articles deal with exact facts. Fine writing need not be attempted. There are many publications that purchase material having to do with modern invention, the application of scientific principles, and explanation of natural phenomena. Other scientific articles deal with public health and safety, and are of a wider appeal.

Technical magazines, such as those devoted to electrical products, pharmaceutical chemistry, and the like, welcome those familiar with subjects that touch their field of service.

It has happened more than once that a genius has been discovered through the submittal of scientific material. Young people's publications welcome suitable science articles if simply and clearly written. They must, of necessity, be short and deal with a single fact or a few co-related facts. A rough drawing will often make sufficient illustration.

The field for material of this kind may begin with the stars in the sky and end—well, there is no end. There is no limit to the subjects one may treat in an interesting way. Writers acquainted with any of the arts, trades, or professions, have a special fund of information from which to draw.

*Suburban Publications.*—The many means of rapid transportation make it possible for the one who labors in the city to live in suburban surroundings. Masonry-bound business districts become wearisome; the human heart longs for a breath of fresh air sweeping across growing fields; for a sight of green grass and brown earth. Surrounding every city and dotting the country in every direction, are suburban settlements, summer colonies, and all-the-year-around towns, inhabited by people of culture, many of whom are occupied with business elsewhere, part of the year at least.

This has given rise to a class of high-grade publications intended to meet the needs of commuters and those who live in country surroundings, although not engaged in agricultural pursuits. Such periodicals deal with a variety of subjects likely to be of interest to the countryside dweller. The following are suggestive:



Arbor Day History and its Advantages, Antique Furniture of Good Taste, Autumn Legends, Preparing the Garden for Winter, The Care of Our Automobile, A Home-made Garage, A Small and Practical Barn, Building Costs, Bird Lore, When We Plant Our Bulbs, Hardy Fall Flowers, Shrubbery, House Plants, The Care of the Pet Cat, Solving the Problem of Lights, Water-Works, Septic Tanks, Gas and Electricity for the Isolated Home, The Breeding of Dogs, Furniture, Upholstery and Drapery Suggestions, The Care of Trees and the Best Way to Combat Various Pests, Schools and Their Efficiency, Advantages of Suburban Life, Weeds and Their Extermination, Making the Most of the Small Garden Plot, Planning the Formal Garden, Raising Flowers and Vegetables for Profit, Small Fruits—Their Care and Preservation, Advantages of Different Styles of Floors and Floor Coverings, Art in the Country Home, Discussions of Wall Coverings and Artistic Decorations, Ideal Kitchen Plans, Advice Concerning the Care of Lawns, The Library of the Home and Country Community, Music and its Influence, Poultry Raising, Road Making, Practical Roofs, Shopping by Mail, The Rural Playground, The Telephone in the New House and the Old, Clothing Suitable for the Countryside, Vacation Articles, Cultivation of Shade Trees, Fruit and Nut Trees.

A wide variety of general articles are used, yet they all have the underlying principle of making life easier, pleasanter, or more beautiful for the suburban dweller.

*Trade Publications.*—Every branch of trade has its own publications—furniture, hardware, carpets, rugs, paints, bakery, transportation, confectionery, implement, vehicle, department store, five and ten cent store, leather goods, sporting goods, poultry, shoes, office equipment, cement, jewelry, grocery, electrical, and so on.

Articles acceptable for these publications may be picked up from time to time by anyone. They may be a description of some special selling method, a report of a newly-established business, the consolidation of two businesses, or a fire that wipes out an old and well-known establishment. Occasionally some firm celebrates its centenary, or the head of the firm becomes a political light, and interest awakens in his characteristics and history.

General trade articles should contain practical and helpful suggestions for better business. You should mention conditions peculiar to the trade for which you are writing in order to give the point of contact and show a familiarity with that field. Sometimes such articles may be written from the standpoint of the customer, other times from that of an observer. A couple of illustrations may be suggestive.

A writer happened to hear a neighbor sputtering about a local paint contractor. The man had charged a large sum for painting a double house, then had demanded fifty cents extra for painting her clothes poles to match. That was all, but it gave an idea for an article which sold the first trip out, entitled "A Costly Clothes Pole." The article showed the short-sighted policy of the contractor who thus offended the owner of considerable tenement property, who promptly transferred her painting patronage to the contractor's competitor. No

special knowledge of the business of painting was necessary. It simply stated facts which might have been self-evident to anyone.

Again, an office worker discovered several short cuts for doing every-day tasks. These were incorporated in an article and readily sold to an office equipment periodical. These opened the way for several other write-ups on "From the Stenographer's Point of View."

Many of the trade publications use fiction dealing with the problems of that particular calling. Practically any story with a business application may be adapted readily to the particular class of trade publication to which you wish it submitted. Suppose, for example, that you wish to emphasize the thought that the man who collects promptly, and discounts his bills, is successful because he has good credit. It is as easy to locate your story in a jewelry store as in a grocery store, and to make your characters play the part.

If you know of anyone in your locality who has employed some unusual business method to keep sales up during the dull summer months, or to stimulate holiday business, or to establish a trade on a special line of goods, write it up and send it to the publication that should be interested in it. Practical advertising methods as well as business gaining plans are acceptable.

*Writing for Syndicates.*—A "Syndicate" is a body of people, or a firm, that undertakes to negotiate business of some kind. Some years ago the idea was conceived of establishing a literary syndicate to buy stories, articles, puzzles, and household material from individuals. This material would be re-sold to a number of publications, all of which would have the right to use it on or after a certain day. This arrangement was made so that no one buying the use of the service would have the advantage of the others. That is, it would be "released" to all on a certain date. This explains why the same story or item may appear in a number of newspapers in different parts of the country on the same day.

Many magazine sections of Sunday papers are partially made up of syndicate material, also the inside pages (patent insides) of many country newspapers. Some syndicates handle only children's pages, others purchase material with a serial quality, while others have use for a miscellany, including stuff of the Walt Mason type, short business articles, or humorous material. Some of these syndicates feature a special service offering a copyrighted short story for use in daily papers.

The prices paid by syndicates are about the same as the smaller magazines' rates, unless it be for leader articles by well-known people, and then large sums are paid. If connection can be formed and satisfactory material furnished, it affords a large market for the writer's efforts.



## CHAPTER IV

### WHY MANUSCRIPTS ARE REJECTED

*Photoplays.*—The rejection of a manuscript is generally a mystery to its author; he can't for the life of him understand why his work should be returned. On the contrary, he fails to perceive how *any* editor could exist without his brain child.

In the light of this, a few words from one who has read several thousand hopeless manuscripts might not be entirely amiss.

One manuscript may be rejected because of its theme; another because of the plot lacks a worth while idea; but, going through the files of my mind, I find that the nine most frequent defects in a beginner's work, in order of their frequency, are as follows: (1) A frank or veiled repetition of a play, or the major part of a play, already filmed; (2) lacking in dramatic possibilities; (3) plot composed of a series of incidents, more or less vaguely related, but not leading to a major climax; (4) a wandering plot, beginning at childhood and ending in old age—lightly skipping from Portland to Paris, for no particular reason; (5) theme too morbid or depressing, or dealing extensively with unpleasant subjects, such as, white slavery, drug using, the underworld, and so on; (6) insincere—writer lacks a knowledge of human nature; (7) lacking in suspense; (8) idea not interesting to the average person; and (9) lack of motive; consequently, no reason why the play should have been written.

It is not necessary to go into details relative to the above defects. All of them have been treated extensively all through previous chapters of this book. It is sufficient to let the beginner definitely know that these form the "mysterious" reasons why so many thousands of photoplays are returned with the little white slip.

*Stories and Articles.*—There are only two good reasons why a story or article should be published: either it appeals to the editor or he thinks his readers will like it. There are, however, a number of excellent reasons for making use of the stamps the author so considerately incloses. Stories are most frequently rejected because they are either (1) unfit, (2) unsuitable, (3) untimely, (4) not in harmony with editorial policy, (5) similar to a story already published or waiting publication, (6) too long, (7) too short, or (8) the story does not appeal to the editor.

Reason number one covers about ninety per cent. of rejections. Most submitted manuscripts are not fit for publication; in fact, the majority are not even worth the paper they are written on—and some arrive laboriously transcribed on discarded grocer's sacks, not to mention cast-off wall paper! In short, most stories and articles are not purchased because they are unfit for publication and could not be made salable even by a genius.

Unsuitableness explains the rejection of a great many manuscripts. Often they are interesting and well-written, but offered to the wrong

magazine. This only goes to prove that the author usually is a poor salesman, incapable of selling his own work; or he is too wrapped up in writing to make a careful study of market conditions and requirements.

Many scripts come back because they are untimely. It is ludicrous how so many writers fail to realize that an event is good copy until long after the public has ceased thinking about it. Again, many beginners do not understand that magazine articles and stories are purchased fully four months in advance of publication. The amateur often forgets to write a Christmas story until the holidays are almost upon him. Then he rushes off a manuscript a couple of months before Christmas—and the editor rushes it back!

There is no need of discussing manuscripts not in harmony with editorial policies. Keep in touch with what editors want, that's all.

An author deserves sympathy when his story is rejected because something similar is being prepared for publication, or has just appeared. But too many writers knowingly solicit defeat by sending in stories and articles like others they have read. To them no sympathy should be forthcoming.

Some stories are rejected because they are too short for division or too long for one installment. This is another case of the author's lack of foresight and judgment.

Many excellent manuscripts have been refused by magazines to whom they were, as far as experienced judgment could perceive, admirably suited, even when those same magazines were in the market for the particular type of story submitted. The same script, perhaps, was quickly accepted by the next magazine to whom it was sent. An editor likes a story, or he doesn't like it. In the latter case, his dislike may be so strong that he doesn't ask himself whether his readers might be interested.

A careful study of the above reasons for rejection will do the beginner a world of good.



## CHAPTER V

### HOW SUCCESSFUL WRITERS SELL THEIR MANUSCRIPTS

There are four ways of selling stories and photoplays: (1) selling under contract; that is, preparing a certain story or play at the editor's order and request; (2) offering your manuscript in person to the studio or magazine to whom you think it is best suited; (3) submitting your work through the mail; and (4) selling through the aid of a Literary Agent, or Bureau.

*Selling Under Contract.*—So far as the beginner is concerned, there is no need of discussing the first method. Only writers of well-established reputation ever are commissioned to write a certain style of play or story.

Some extremely popular authors have contracted to supply various magazines and studios with their entire output of work for a fixed period; but, inasmuch as reputation is the primary prerequisite, the method need not be discussed.

*Offering a Manuscript in Person.*—No time need be wasted on this method. Editors are busy men; they do not have time to devote to interviews. The chances are that both you and your work will receive slight consideration if you attempt to sell it in person. If you go to an editor with your work in hand, the chances are that he will reject it without giving it a fair chance—unless you are well-known; but, if you send it to him through the mail, it will be given as much of a chance to prove its merits as any other script, no matter whom the author.

This brings us to the third method of selling.

*Selling Through the Mail.*—This is perhaps the most common way to dispose of manuscripts. Where one manuscript is sold by either of the above methods, perhaps a thousand are sold through the mail.

Don't be afraid to mail your script to an editor for consideration. Very rarely indeed is one lost; and, if you keep a carbon copy of everything you send out, you won't even need to register your letter.

For some incomprehensible reason, many beginners are often possessed with the absurd notion that editors steal work. To the experienced editor this is laughable. For years the author has personally supervised the submittal of hundreds, yes thousands, of stories to magazines all over the country. *And not a single case of theft, or attempted theft, has come to his attention.* I do not believe there is a magazine in the country that would steal any part of a submitted story. They are absolutely honest and trustworthy. Why shouldn't they be? Is there any reason in the world why a magazine editor should steal a manuscript, face future disgrace and unlimited expense through publicity and legal redress, when he can buy all the good productions he can use at regular rates, and be on the safe side?

True, I have heard it whispered in dark corners that some *motion*

*picture studios* have in the past made use of ideas sent them without purchasing the scripts in which they appeared. In fact, it is said that a certain "reader" in Los Angeles—employed by a well-known film company to pass on all submitted manuscripts—took the plot of a submitted script and sold it as his own. But justice soon overtook him. To-day he is a wandering outcast, living in disgrace as far as the motion picture industry is concerned. So, you see, even photoplay editors do not tolerate theft.

The motion picture industry is young; naturally it was, in the beginning, infected with pirates; but the day has passed when a writer need be afraid of submitting anything to any reputable film manufacturer. They will treat you "square."

*Selling Through the Literary Agency, or Bureau.*—Many successful authors sell practically their entire output of stories and plays through agencies. Different agencies have different methods of procedure. As a rule, the author leaves the question of price to the agent. He may, however, set a maximum and a minimum price to be paid for his work. In addition, he generally makes a deposit to cover cost of postage to and from various editors. This, of course, he would be required to pay himself if he submitted his own work. In addition to the postage, he is required to pay the agent a commission—usually from ten to twenty per cent.—of the price his work brings.

This method has many advantages over all others. The agent keeps in close touch with all magazines and studios; he has their requirements at his finger-tips, so to speak; he knows the fine points with respect to editorial tastes, needs and peculiarities, so knows exactly to whom to submit—a thing few writers know, not having the time or the inclination to study market requirements; he knows which editors are overstocked; he saves the author the embarrassment and trouble of selling—a thing he is rarely capable of doing well—thus giving the author more time for his writing; and, as a rule, the agent is able to secure a higher price than the author.

Some would-be advisors have warned authors not to have dealings with agents under any circumstances, claiming they are dishonest and likely to steal manuscripts, then sell them under slightly altered form. How brainlessly idiotic is this accusation! What a fool an agent would be to risk his reputation, his business, and his comfortable income derived from sales, for the petty, paltry trick of stealing a manuscript. Suppose, however, that an agent did steal one. Even suppose he succeeded in selling it for \$5,000—a pretty good price, by the way. He would be the loser; he would be disgraced, he would be prosecuted, his business would be ruined, his income and source of living cut off. In short, he would lose liberty, reputation, happiness, and a life-long business—amounting the thousands of dollars, perhaps—for the comparatively paltry sum he would get for one manuscript. Don't you see how senseless it would be to accuse agents of theft?

Some of the greatest writers in the world have indorsed literary agencies. Thousands of writers have succeeded through the help of the agent when they had hopelessly failed on their own behalf. There is no reason in the world why you should not offer your work for sale through an agency if you desire.



## CHAPTER VI

### MERITING SUCCESS

Do not expect that everything you write will sell readily. You may not have offered it in the right direction, or at the right time, or possibly your manuscript is weak in some respect. There are many writers who rejoice that their first amateur efforts did not sell. But keep on trying! Let your motto be, "I will beat my own record," and remember you have no competitor to fear except Yesterday.

Success will not be attained by spasmodic efforts. The writer must be regular and persistent, yet even regularity and persistence may have a drawback, if the same mistakes are made over and over. The fault you do not see may be a mannerism of speech, or an attitude of mind you have never recognized because it has so long been a part of your own life.

A writer of unusual talent succeeded in gaining a small editorial hearing. Beyond this he did not seem to be able to go. The trouble was that, because of an unhappy childhood, he viewed everything from a critical, doubting angle, almost invariably leaving an unpleasant taste in the reader's mouth. Even his rejection slips embittered him.

Another writer with a similar background argued: "I know what the lack of happiness means, so the highest purpose of my life shall be to bring sunshine into the lives of others. My words shall carry optimism, and hope, and cheer. They shall point outward and upward rather than down." And so her writing, though it dealt with homely things, had all the inspirational value of an angel's song. The thoughts she sent out to others were so generous and true that a Gulf Stream of Appreciation flowed back to her.

It is not possible for us always to diagnose our own cases. We may lack the knowledge or the faculty to be purely disinterested. A manuscript sent out vainly a dozen times may eat up as much postage as would pay for an expert diagnosis.

The manufacturer of fine extracts or good soaps prepares his merchandise and then puts it away to ripen. If he offers his product for sale at once he knows it is inferior to what it will be later on. The boy who leaves school at fourteen or fifteen to earn a weekly wage of eight, ten, or even fifteen dollars, may feel rich, but what about the future? What will be his earning capacity in ten years?

The writer who is too impatient to give proper time and preparation to his work, who offers crude and immature products, is not using as much foresight and policy as one who plans, writes, and waits until the material cools off, then revises and writes again.

Greater is the reward of the author who sells one article for twenty dollars than the reward of another who sells two for ten. The twenty-dollar check shows the first has acquired a much greater earning capacity than the second who received the ten-dollar check. The first can soon turn out two products of the twenty-dollar class as easily and

in as short a time as the other can turn out three at ten dollars. And so their paths diverge, one becoming constantly more capable, the other barely holding his own.

What shall I write? Let my own heart answer. Manufactured interest on my part will not call forth spontaneous interest on the part of readers. Enthusiasm begets enthusiasm.

Why shall I write? That I may serve my fellow people by adding to the richness of their lives in some way. Unless I have something to give, I may not hope to get. "He who serves best profits most." "The labourer is worthy of his hire," but conscientious labor must come before the expectation of reward.

When shall I write? Regularly, persistently, tirelessly. A little success may be won in a short time by the few, but back of that success is sure to be a logical explanation. An amateur speaker was called upon to address an important public audience. Being in earnest, and having something to say, he carried his hearers with him and was applauded to the echo. The newspapers rang with the masterful address.

"How long were you preparing that speech?" the man was asked.

"Why," he returned thoughtfully, "I had about an hour's notice. I made these notes on the back of an envelope."

"Ah," said the other, "I must take issue with you. Your preparation really stretched over the years of your whole life."

Was it not so with Lincoln's address at Gettysburg? Sometimes the moments consumed in recording experiences and conclusions are not as many as the years spent in preparation.

The writer should plan to devote regular time to his work, even if it is the spare cracks of time and the little pieces one spends commuting to and from the business office. Remember the story of the doctor who succeeded in writing a large and important volume by persistently making use of every moment he waited for his patients to answer the door bell.

Where shall I write? In the place I feel most at home, or where I must. If absolutely necessary, ordinary obstacles can be surmounted. The obstacles may test the mettle of the worker after all.

How shall I write? By realizing the importance of my task, by seeing before me the vast audience I address through the written word, or the pictured act, and, in fact, never daring to do other than my best. Let my head be clear, my hand steady, and my subject worthy and familiar, then I will feel the joy of life, the satisfaction of service, and shall not fail to receive the rewards I have merited.



## CHAPTER VII

### WHERE TO SELL MANUSCRIPTS

#### *Photoplays*

American Film Co., Inc., Santa Barbara, Cal.  
Artcraft Pictures Corp. See Famous Players-Lasky Corp.  
Blue Bird Features. See Universal Film Mfg. Co.  
Brunton Studio, 5311 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.  
Christie Film Co., Inc., Sunset Blvd. and Gower Sts., Los Angeles, Cal.  
Diando Motion Picture Co., Glendale, Los Angeles, Cal.  
Dorothy Gish Co., Sunset Studio, 4520 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal.  
Douglas Fairbanks Co., Sunset & Argyle, Los Angeles, Cal.  
Drew-Paramount Pictures, 220 W. 42nd St., New York.  
Ebony Film Corp., 608 S. Dearborn St., Chicago.  
Essanay Film Mfg. Co., 1333 Argyle St., Chicago.  
Famous Players-Lasky Corp., 485 Fifth Ave., New York.  
Fox Film Corp., 130 W. 46th St., New York.  
Frohmam Amusement Corp., Times Bldg., New York.  
Gaumont Co., Flushing, N. Y.  
Goldwyn Pictures Corp., 16 W. 42nd St., New York.  
Haworth Pictures Corp., Hellman Bldg., Los Angeles, Cal.  
International Film Service, 729 Seventh Ave., New York.  
Ivan Film Prod., Inc., 126 W. 46th St., New York.  
Frank A. Keeney Pictures Corp., 1493 Broadway, New York.  
Keystone Film Co., 1712 Alessandro St., Los Angeles, Cal.  
L-Ko Motion Picture Co., 6100 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal.  
Mabel Condon Exchange, 6035 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal.  
Mack Sennett Comedies, Los Angeles, Cal.  
Mary Pickford Productions, Hollywood, Cal.  
National Film Corp., Englewood, Cal.  
Paramount Pictures Corp. See Famous Players-Lasky Corp.  
Pathé Exchange, 25 W. 45th St., New York.  
Renowned Pictures Corp., 1600 Broadway, New York.  
Rolin Film Co., Los Angeles, Cal.  
Select Pictures, Inc., 729 Seventh Ave., New York.  
Selig Polyscope Co., 58 E. Washington St., Chicago.  
Southern California Producing Co., 6101 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, Cal.  
Sunshine Comedies, Inc., Western & Longpre Aves., Los Angeles, Cal.  
Norma Talmage Film Corp., 1493 Broadway, New York.  
Universal Film Mfg. Co., 1600 Broadway, New York.  
Vitagraph Co. of America, E. 15th St. & Locust Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.  
Vogue Film Co., Gower & Santa Monica Sts., Los Angeles, Cal.

World Film Corp., 130 W. 46th St., New York, N. Y.  
Clara Kimball Young Co., Aeolian Hall, New York.

#### *Standard Magazines*

Adventure, Spring and Macdougall streets, New York.  
Ainslee's Magazine, 79 Seventh Ave., New York.  
All-Story Weekly, 8 West 40th St., New York.  
American Ambition, 422 Land Title Bldg., Phila., Pa.  
American Magazine, 381 Fourth Ave., New York.  
Argonaut, 406 Sutter St., San Francisco, Cal.  
Argosy, 8 West 40th St., New York.  
Atlantic Monthly, 3 Park St., Boston, Mass.  
Bellman, 118 S. 15th St., Minneapolis, Minn.  
Black Cat, Salem, Mass.  
Blue Book, North American Bldg., Chicago.  
Bookman, The, 443 Fourth Ave., New York.  
Breezy Stories, 112 East 19th St., New York.  
Business Philosopher, Area, Ill.  
Canadian Courier, 181 Simcoe St., Toronto.  
Canadian Magazine, Toronto.  
Cartoons, 6 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago.  
Century Magazine, 353 Fourth Ave., New York.  
Collier's Weekly, 416 West 13th St., New York.  
Colonade, Box 44, University Heights, N. Y.  
Cosmopolitan, 119 West 140th St., New York.  
Current History, Times Bldg., New York.  
Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Ave., New York.  
Dial, The, 623 Sherman St., Chicago.  
Everybody's Magazine, Spring and Macdougall Streets, New York.  
Film Fun, 225 Fifth Ave., New York.  
Forbes Magazine, 120 Broadway, New York.  
Forum, 286 Fifth Ave., New York.  
Green Book, North American Bldg., Chicago.  
Harper's Magazine, Franklin Square, New York.  
Hearst's Magazine, 119 West 40th St., New York.  
Holland's Magazine, Dallas, Tex.  
Illustrated World, Drexel Ave. and 58th St., Chicago.  
Independent, The, 119 West 40th St., New York.  
Judge, 225 Fifth Ave., New York.  
Leslie's Weekly, 225 Fifth Ave., New York.  
Life, 17 West 31st St., New York.  
Literary Digest, The, 354 Fourth Ave., New York.  
Live Stories, 35 West 39th St., New York.  
McClure's Magazine, Fourth Ave. and 20th St., New York.

MacLean's Magazine, Toronto.  
 Metropolitan Magazine, 432 Fourth Ave., New York.  
 Modern Methods, Detroit, Mich.  
 Munsey's Magazine, 8 West 40th St., New York.  
 National Magazine, 952 Dorchester Ave., Boston, Mass.  
 New Republic, 421 West 21st St., New York.  
 Outlook, 381 Fourth Ave., New York.  
 Parisienne, 461 Eighth Ave., New York.  
 Pearson's Magazine, 34 Union Square, New York.  
 People's Popular Monthly, Des Moines, Ia.  
 Physical Culture, Flatiron Bldg., New York.  
 Poetry, A Magazine of Verse, 543 Cass St., Chicago.  
 Popular Magazine, 79 Seventh Ave., New York.  
 Popular Mechanics Magazine, 6 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago.  
 Popular Science Monthly, 225 West 39th St., New York.  
 Puck, 210 Fifth Ave., New York.  
 Railroad Man's Magazine, 8 West 40th St., New York.  
 Recreation, 2 West 33d St., New York.  
 Red Book, North American Bldg., Chicago.  
 Review of Reviews, 30 Irving Place, New York.  
 Saturday Evening Post, Independence Square, Phila., Pa.  
 Saucy Stories, 461 Eighth Ave., New York.  
 Scribner's Magazine, Fifth Ave., at 48th St., New York.  
 Short Stories, Garden City, L. I., N. Y.  
 Smart Set, 461 Eighth Ave., New York.  
 Smith's Magazine, 79 Seventh Ave., New York.  
 Snappy Stories, 35 West 39th St., New York.  
 Sunset Magazine, San Francisco, Cal.  
 System, Madison St. and Wabash Ave., Chicago.  
 10 Story Book, 537 S. Dearborn St., Chicago.  
 Top-Notch Magazine, 79 Seventh Ave., New York.  
 Touchstone Magazine, 118 30th St., New York.  
 Town Topics, 2 West 45th St., New York.  
 Travel, 31 East 17th St., New York.  
 Vanity Fair, 449 Fourth Ave., New York.  
 World's Work, Garden City, L. I., N. Y.  
 Young's Magazine, 112 East 19th St., New York.  
 Youth's Companion, 881 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, Mass.

#### *Women's Publications*

American Cookery, 372 Boylston St., Boston, Mass.  
 American Motherhood, Cooperstown, N. Y.  
 Business Woman's Magazine, Newburgh, N. Y.  
 Canadian Home Journal, 71 Richmond St., West, Toronto.

Delineator, Spring and Macdougall Streets, New York.  
 Designer, 12 Vandam St., New York.  
 Everywoman's World, 62 Temperance St., Toronto.  
 Family, Simmons Publishing Co., Springfield, O.  
 Farmer's Wife, St. Paul, Minn.  
 Gentlewoman, 649 West 43d St., New York.  
 Good Housekeeping, 119 West 40th St., New York.  
 Harper's Bazar, 119 West 40th St., New York.  
 Home Friend Magazine, Kansas City, Mo.  
 Home Life, 141 West Ohio St., Chicago.  
 Household Guest, 550 North La Salle St., Chicago.  
 Ladies' Home Journal, Independence Square, Phila., Pa.  
 McCall's Magazine, 236 West 37th St., New York.  
 Modern Priscilla, Boston, Mass.  
 Mother's Magazine, Elgin, Ill.  
 Pictorial Review, 216 West 39th St., New York.  
 Spare Moments, Allentown, Pa.  
 Southern Woman's Magazine, Nashville, Tenn.  
 Today's Housewife, 461 Fourth Ave., New York.  
 Vogue, 443 Fourth Ave., New York.  
 Woman's Home Companion, 381 Fourth Ave., New York.  
 Woman's Magazine, 636 Broadway, New York.  
 Woman's World, 107 South Clinton St., Chicago, Ill.

#### *Juvenile Publications*

American Boy, The, Detroit, Mich.  
 Beacon, 25 Beacon St., Boston, Mass.  
 Boys' Life, 200 Fifth Ave., New York.  
 Boys' Magazine, Smethport, Pa.  
 Boys' World, Elgin, Ill.  
 Child's Gem, 161 Eighth Ave., Nashville, Tenn.  
 Dew Drops, Elgin, Ill.  
 Every Child's Magazine, Omaha, Nebr.  
 Fame and Fortune, 166 West 23d St., New York.  
 Forward, Witherspoon Bldg., Phila., Pa.  
 Girl's Companion, Elgin, Ill.  
 Girl's World, 1701 Chestnut St., Phila., Pa.  
 John Martin's Book, Garden City, L. I., N. Y.  
 Little Folks, Salem, Mass.  
 Round Table, 2712 Pine St., St. Louis, Mo.  
 St. Nicholas Magazine, 353 Fourth Ave., New York.  
 What To Do, Elgin, Ill.  
 The Young Churchman, 484 Milwaukee St., Milwaukee, Wis.  
 Young Crusader, 1730 Chicago Ave., Evanston, Ill.  
 Young Folks, 1716 Arch St., Phila., Pa.  
 Youth's World, 1701 Chestnut St., Phila., Pa.





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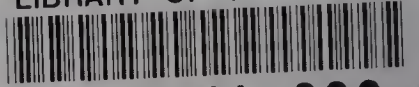
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